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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 3 November 1999**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 3 novembre 1999**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

**Organization**

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

**Organisation**



Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes

Président : Gerard Kennedy  
Greffière : Anne Stokes



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES

Wednesday 3 November 1999

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Mercredi 3 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1601 in room 228.*

## ELECTION OF CHAIR

**Clerk of the Committee (Ms Anne Stokes):** Honourable members, it is my duty to call upon you to elect a Chair. Are there any nominations?

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** I move that Gerard Kennedy be the Chair of the standing committee on estimates.

**Clerk of the Committee:** Mr Kennedy is nominated for Chair. Are there any further nominations?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I move Wayne Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I decline. I'll second the nomination of Mr Kennedy.

**Clerk of the Committee:** Mr Wettlaufer declines?

**Mr Curling:** Not up to the job.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You got it, Alvin.

**Clerk of the Committee:** No further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare nominations closed, and Mr Kennedy is elected Chair of the committee.

## ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** Members, I'm going to call for nominations to elect a Vice-Chair. Any nominations, please?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I would like to nominate Alvin Curling to the position of Vice-Chair.

**The Chair:** We have the nomination of Mr Curling. Any further nominations? Seeing no further nominations, Mr Curling, I declare the nominations closed and you elected as Vice-Chair of the committee. Congratulations.

## APPOINTMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

**The Chair:** The next business of the committee is to appoint the subcommittee to determine committee business. I'm looking for the mover, and it would be Mr O'Toole.

**Mr O'Toole:** I move that a subcommittee on committee business be appointed to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair, or at the request of any member thereof, to consider and report to the committee on the business of the committee; that the presence of all

members of the subcommittee is necessary to constitute a meeting and that the subcommittee be composed of the following members: Mr Kennedy, Mr Bisson, Mr Wettlaufer and Mr Conway; and that any member may designate a substitute member on the subcommittee who is of the same recognized party.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion of this motion? All those in favour? Any opposed? No. I declare the motion carried.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Chair:** We have a heading here for other business. I want to raise one point with the committee, and that is the tenure of estimates. The House leaders will be in discussion tomorrow about extending the period for estimates. You may understand that the standing orders declare that by the third week of November the estimates are deemed to have been reported. In other election years, this reporting period has been adjusted—there's an amendment to the standing orders—with the co-operation of all three parties, because the other implication certainly would be that we would not review many, if any, ministries before that deadline was passed.

I hope the members of each of the parties—and we'll certainly convey it to the NDP—will support the idea that there should at least be a reasonable period of consideration for the estimates, without which this committee's effectiveness is basically nullified.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** The position that our government is going to take is that we have had, we realize, an extension of the period in the past, but certainly in 1995 that was as a result of the NDP already presenting its estimates. They had also set up the schedule, and our government decided that we wanted extra time in order to change the direction we were going to take. The other thing we have to keep in mind is that we had an election this year which disrupted the normal estimates process, and we feel we should pretty well stick to the schedule which has been set in the standing orders.

We also think we should make it as easy as possible on the Chair of the estimates committee. We've noticed that in the past, for instance in 1997, the Chair missed 13 of 25 meetings, which would be an attendance rate of 48%, and in 1998 he was only able to attend 11 of 17 meetings. We think it's important that our government be



helpful to the Chair and make it easy that the Chair attend those meetings.

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, those statistics and that intervention, and those sentiments most of all, are most appreciated. I'm sure you wouldn't want to neglect to note that there were 17 meetings and there were 25 meetings. There was a reasonable effort by this committee to discharge its obligation, which is my only concern as Chair. I'm sure you would want the contribution of our very able Vice-Chair, Rick Bartolucci, to be noted, because at all times this committee was chaired, I think, in the interests of the Ontario public.

We have had some commentary. I'll leave it open for any other members who would like to make comment. I would hope that at the House leaders' meeting there might be a change in disposition on the part of the committee, because certainly I believe there is a worthwhile purpose to this committee, a contribution to be made by parties from each side of the House. Again, the happenstance of when this committee is meeting means that probably no ministry will actually be called forward by this committee, given the notice period and so forth. Unless we're prepared to make designations of ministries today, we stand in a committee very challenged to fulfill any of our responsibilities as mandated by the standing orders and the conventions of the House.

As a Chair from the official opposition, certainly we take very seriously the role of this committee, as I know all members do. But I would like to open the floor to considerations from the members on this subject of the sitting time for estimates, and then we'll conclude our deliberations for today.

**Mr Curling:** I am actually shocked to know that Mr Wettlaufer would have made such a statement. I'm glad he raised the point that there was an election and the new government of the day is registered. This is a new era now for this government. What they're saying is that they will continue to do what they have to do.

So far, they have made a throne speech which is slightly different. There are many estimates that were not even looked at the last time. You made reference to the fact that when the NDP was out in 1995, you asked for an extension in order to deal with the matter. It's the same matter here now. It seems to me that you were trying to say, Mr Wettlaufer, that democracy was interrupted by an election. You were saying that things are—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I didn't say that.

**Mr Curling:** Well, here we are returning, and Mr Chair, as you say, since not much has changed and the job was not completed, you feel an extension of the time would be necessary to keep the democratic process in place. I know your government would like to be accountable and that you have nothing to hide whatsoever. The estimates coming forward is an opportunity for us to examine what's going on within the government. I'm sure you have capable civil servants who will of course aid you if the ministers are unable to answer the questions.

The fact is that we and the people on whose behalf we speak, the constituents outside, would like to know the happenings within each ministry. I think we could appeal to you in your own democratic sense of rights that you so believe in that an extension of time would give an opportunity not only to the people but to many—Mr Mazzilli, for instance, being for the first time on the committee, would like to see how it is operated and how the estimates process is exercised. It will give him that opportunity too.

I know that if I appeal to many of those members—Mr O'Toole and Mr Stewart—they are reasonable men. You don't need directions from inside the inner circle to tell you how to behave in a democratic manner. I know that extension is a very reasonable, democratic request.

Let me just comment on behalf of the Chair, who was so attacked, that he is one of the most able individuals in the House, a hard-working person. If that individual, the Chair, was not here at the time of estimates, Mr Bartolucci was the Vice-Chair, another excellent individual. At no time was the estimates committee compromised while Mr Kennedy was doing other, just as important, things outside. I know that Mr Wettlaufer did not mean in any way that he was not on other duties, doing another job. It has never been compromised at all.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Curling. I'm sure the Hansard for the committee would show that a high degree of the active participation of members like Mr Wettlaufer was directed at myself, and perhaps that was a comment on his views of the quality of the proceedings.

I would open the floor perhaps, Mr Curling, if it's all right, to other members. We'll keep this meeting brief and perhaps defer some of this matter to our subcommittee to look at if there are other ways and means that this committee can reach its obligations.

Before Mr Wettlaufer is considered, would any other members of the government caucus like to address this issue I've raised for our consideration ahead of the House leaders' deliberation, which is whether estimates should sit this year and do its business and whether you wish to see your rights as members of this committee addressed or not addressed? I think it's appropriate that the committee have some say before that decision is rendered. Mr Wettlaufer, I have your request. Any other members who would also like to be heard? Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I think it's very important to note that the estimates are a matter of public record, they are on the public record for review, and any questions or concerns about them can be addressed during question period or concurrence in supply debate. Also, Mr Chair, you've already indicated that the House leaders will be discussing this within the next couple of days. I think it would be very presumptuous of this committee to make any recommendations to the House leaders. I think we should recommend to the House leaders that they go ahead and discuss it amongst themselves without any further discussion at this committee. I would so move that we refrain from making any recommendation to the House leaders in that regard.



**The Chair:** I'll rule that out of order, Mr Wettlaufer. The ability and prerogative of this Chair is to call a subcommittee, which is all that has been proposed. There isn't a motion on the floor so I can't entertain a motion to limit the prerogative. The orders of the House have precedence over any motions we might make at this committee. We may meet as a subcommittee at my discretion, or the discretion indeed of yourself or any other member of the committee, in the intervening time. If I understand correctly, there isn't a motion put forward yet on a recommendation to the House leaders from this committee. All that has been put forward is an opportunity for members of this committee to express themselves. So, Mr Wettlaufer, I'm ruling your motion out of order for the time being.

Again, do any other members wish to address the matter at hand, as to whether estimates committee sits and reviews the estimates of 1999-2000 in this fiscal year, whether those estimates receive any scrutiny, as we're charged to do as members of this committee—mindful too, as I'm sure each of us, that we will sit for approximately five weeks out of the 52-week calendar year. This committee contains some members who I know from past experience have zeal and energy on behalf of the House business, and they may wish indeed to propose perhaps other ways that we can address this, looking for any suggestions or solutions which would otherwise see us not sit as a committee, not consider and really not do the people's business. Any suggestions at all? OK, there are no other members willing to go on the record at this time.

**Mr Curling:** Can I just make a few comments, Mr Chair? I must say, I was quite disappointed in Mr Wettlaufer for making that suggestion—I call it a suggestion, not a motion—which you correctly ruled out of order. I hope the House leaders will be seeing this Hansard, wherein they are quite aware that the House has only sat seven days in the last almost 10 months. To say that we can bring these things forward in question period, if we have any questions about estimates, is just ignoring the facts staring us in the face. I hope we can find just a short extension in order to review some of those issues in estimates. I hope the recommendation goes forward for that extension. I support that.

**The Chair:** There's a matter that we're checking in terms of the business of this committee so I'd like to declare a two-minute recess to give the clerk time to investigate. We'll be reconvening as soon after that as we can.

*The committee recessed from 1615 to 1621.*

**The Chair:** Mr Bisson and others members of the committee, we'll call the committee back to order, the recess being over. We will proceed to the business of this committee, which is to declare choices, selections for estimates. We would also like to extend to Mr Bisson a brief opportunity to address the dilemma of the committee in this particular year, of which he may indeed, from his prior experience, be aware. That is, the estimates committee is deemed to be reported by the third Thurs-

day of this month, which would mean a very strong restriction. We have been canvassing the members for their views about the limitations that puts on the estimates committee and the discussions the House leaders may have about extending that period. Mr Bisson, you may or may not wish to add your remarks to the record. I'll give you that opportunity.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I wasn't part of these discussions, but let me be clairvoyant. The Tory government opposed extending. I would imagine.

**The Chair:** We've only heard from Mr Wettlaufer, but he was a bit authoritative, I would say.

**Mr Bisson:** All kidding aside, and as much as we like to poke fun at each other every now and then, estimates is the one committee that gives all members of the House, including the government, an opportunity to bring forward those issues that they think are important.

Why do you look, Wayne, as if you've swallowed a mouse or something?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm just listening to you with all my patience and with all my attention.

**Mr Bisson:** Well, this is good, Wayne, because what I'm going to tell you is simply this: It's a committee that we've all had an opportunity to sit on. Most of us here have sat on it, I think. We know what it's about: It's being able to bring forward in a very different way, as a private member, issues that are important for us in our constituencies directly to the ministers and staff, to hold them accountable for the expenditures of their ministries; but also, from our caucus perspectives, to be able to do the same.

I'm not going to belabour the point because I understand mathematics. This is the estimates committee. I count five government members and two voting opposition members. I will test democracy and see if it works.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** This is truly democracy in action.

**Mr Bisson:** Just one last point, Mr Chair. I think this will be a question of democracy, but the tyranny of the majority, I would think.

**The Chair:** We have had some discussion. We've yet to see a motion put forward in this regard. It was really each member—

**Mr Bisson:** I would love to put a motion forward, Mr Chair: that the estimates committee be charged to sit many times this fall session to be able to deal with estimates of the various ministries, considering that we have been late coming back and haven't had proper time to deal with the full estimates.

**The Chair:** That would go forward as a request from this committee to the House leaders. Is that what your motion is?

**Mr Curling:** I second that.

**The Chair:** And Mr Curling is the seconder. Any discussion on this motion?

**Mr Bisson:** You guys are learning.

**The Chair:** Mr Bisson, did you wish to speak further to the motion?

**Mr Bisson:** I just want to say that I would hope the government members would support this. I somehow



think they won't. I somehow think this will be the question of the majority deciding they don't want to do this. I think it's wrong. Quite frankly, I've been on both sides of this committee, as a government member and opposition member. I hope you never have an opportunity to sit in opposition. Well, I do hope that. You've got to understand. I hope you never get to sit in opposition because I hope you're all defeated next time. That was what I wanted to get at.

But it is really a good committee. It's a non-partisan committee to a certain extent, and we really do have an opportunity to hold to task the individual expenditures of ministries. Having sat on the government side of this committee, it was the one opportunity as a government member to hold ministries accountable for some of the decisions that I thought may or may not have been good or bad. For government members it's equally important.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that comment. I will call for the vote.

**Mr Bisson:** Recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Recorded vote.

#### Ayes

Bisson, Curling.

#### Nays

Mazzilli, O'Toole, Stewart, Wettlaufer.

**The Chair:** I declare the motion lost.

Yes, Mr Wettlaufer?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I would like to suggest that we hear from the Ministry of the Solicitor General—

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, I have to follow standing orders. The standing orders give a sequence for selection, and yours will come right after the honourable members' from the official opposition and from the newly recognized third party. I will now turn to Mr Curling on behalf of the official opposition.

For the benefit of all members, we have two rounds, a total of 15 hours in each round. Up to two ministries may be chosen, and you are asked to select the ministries or ministry that you wish to review in each round and the number of hours for each ministry. Again, each round is 15 hours, and you give us the breakdown of hours for each ministry you're putting forward, if it's more than one, for the first 15 hours.

**Mr Curling:** Let me just make sure about this. It's 15 hours in total?

**The Chair:** In each round. The first round is yours, Mr Curling, and your party's. It consists of 15 hours to be allocated to either one ministry or to two ministries and it may be broken down any way your party sees fit.

**Mr Curling:** My party would suggest that we bring forward the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Education.

**The Chair:** What hours are you assigning to each of those?

**Mr Curling:** We'll allocate them at—I think it's a big issue—I would say five for housing and 10 for education.

**The Chair:** Mr Curling has put forward the first two ministries: five hours for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; 10 hours for the Ministry of Education.

So that you're aware, Mr Curling, and for the purposes of the committee members, estimates are still in the format of education and training and colleges and universities as one ministry, so that's what we have to call forward, although the party may wish to only focus on one part of that combined ministry.

Mr Bisson, your party's choices?

**Mr Bisson:** I'll allow the members of the government to be clairvoyant for a moment because I'm going to pick two ministries and split them equally: first of all, the Premier's office, followed by the Solicitor General.

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, for the government party.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I would like to select the Solicitor General for 15 hours and community and social services for a further 15 hours.

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, each round consists of 15 hours. We'll give you another opportunity and we'll come back, and we now have some insight as to what that may be. The Solicitor General has already been selected, Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** How many hours are yours?

**Mr Bisson:** Seven hours.

**The Chair:** Seven and a half, I guess.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Then we'll pick community and social services for 15 hours.

**The Chair:** So community and social services for 15 hours is Mr Wettlaufer's choice for the government party.

We go back to Mr Curling, the second round, another 15 hours.

**Mr Curling:** The second round, Mr Chairman, is the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Health, and they're split equally.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Mr Bisson?

**Mr Bisson:** Again split equally, I would go with the Attorney General's office and the ministry of native affairs.

**The Chair:** We're just checking. Those have been filed separately, so they can be reviewed separately. Thank you, Mr Bisson. Mr Wettlaufer, your second choice?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Could I ask one question, Chair? I didn't hear the selection of Alvin Curling.

**Mr Curling:** Environment and health.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** And we'll pick agriculture.

**Clerk of the Committee:** For 15?

**The Chair:** Agriculture for 15, yes. And those aren't points and this isn't a game show.

Members, those are the standing orders. We are required to give advance notice to the ministries. We are mindful that we are not permitted to sit during constituency week, which is next week, so we will consider this the notice period for them. The first ministry, which will

be the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will be called for sitting on Tuesday, November 16, and on November 17 it will be the remainder of that time and any time remaining for the Ministry of Education, but I think our time will be used exclusively by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As was previously stated, the further sitting of this committee will be subject to the determination of the House leaders.

Any other business that will advance the interest of this committee?

**Mr Curling:** Just one other thing, Mr Chair. When will we know of the ruling about whether we'll be sitting as an estimates committee?

**The Chair:** Each of the House leaders will be privy to those discussions. We sit, by order of the House, Tuesday and Wednesday at this time, at 3:30, until the third Thursday of November, unless that is changed by resolution.

I will ask the clerk to make sure that everyone is aware of the outcome of that, should members' business take them away from the House on the day that's determined. As soon as we know, we will advise each and every member of the committee. I'll just put members on notice that we may have a subcommittee meeting once we see what the disposition is of the House leaders.

Thank you very much for your time today.

*The committee adjourned at 1632.*



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### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

#### Chair / Président

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park L)

#### Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River L)

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James ND)

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke L)

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River L)

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park L)

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe PC)

Mr John O'Toole (Durham PC)

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough PC)

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre / -Centre PC)

#### Clerk / Greffière

Ms Anne Stokes

#### Staff / Personnel

Ms Anne Marzalik, research officer, Legislative Research Service



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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 16 November 1999

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 16 novembre 1999

## Standing committee on estimates

Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing

## Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Ministère des Affaires municipales  
et du Logement

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes



Président : Gerard Kennedy  
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STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES

Tuesday 16 November 1999

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Mardi 16 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1546 in room 228.*

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I'll call this meeting to order.

Thank you, Minister, for attending promptly. We will try and make a full sitting day today. We will commence the hearings of estimates on municipal affairs and housing today. We will begin with half an hour by the minister, half an hour to the official opposition, and half an hour to the third party, and then a response by the minister.

Just before we start, I would like to introduce Anne Stokes, our clerk; Sandra Arrizza, who is here from Hansard; our research officer, Anne Marzalik; and Adrian James, who is here with broadcast and recording.

One quick announcement, Minister; pardon me. The sitting times for estimates, I have been advised, are in discussion between the House leaders, so just to put all the committee members on notice that there may be more hearings than the ones we had planned for this week.

Second, just to let you know, I will be subbed as the Chair and I will be coming back a little bit later today.

Without any further ado, Minister, I would like to welcome you to the committee and I would like you to commence.

MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL  
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. Before we got started I allowed myself a little bit of reminiscing, because three years ago I sat on this committee and participated in it. It's good to see some familiar faces as well as some new faces on this committee.

I am here on behalf of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. With me with respect to the committee's proceedings is Michael Fenn. He is the ministry's deputy minister.

You have before you our ministry's 1999-2000 estimates outlining our proposed expenditures for the current fiscal year. I want to express my excitement at the opportunity to discuss these with you and to get this committee's input and analysis.

I'm pleased to take the time allocated to me to discuss some of the many accomplishments of the ministry.

As you know, our government was first elected in 1995 with a mandate to generate economic growth and investment in Ontario and to create new jobs. There were several key components to our common sense plan, cutting taxes being a primary one, and our government has been pleased to announce a total of 99 tax cuts to date. I dare say we are only beginning.

Another significant component was spending taxpayers' money more responsibly. We knew there wasn't a household in this province that hasn't had to make the family budget stretch a little bit further. There wasn't a company in Ontario that hadn't found creative ways to cut costs and improve products or services at the same time. We knew it was time to demand the same things from our government.

We were determined to provide better services for taxpayers for less. We wanted to reduce the waste and duplication, we wanted to eliminate job-killing red tape, we wanted to ensure that the bureaucracy was more accountable and responsible and we wanted to make government more accountable and accessible to the people of Ontario.

Meeting these goals has been the focus of many of the initiatives of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today I would like to discuss with you how we have worked to help municipal government be more efficient and more responsive to local needs, how we have streamlined the planning process to make it more effective and more accountable, how we have reformed and simplified the province's social housing program and how we are working to create a housing market that is both healthy and competitive. These and other issues will be the focus of my remarks today.

It has long been recognized that Canadians are one of the most overgoverned and overtaxed peoples in the world. As the government, one of our fundamental goals has always been less government. When we came into office we were determined to act and we started with ourselves. We restructured the provincial ridings to match the federal boundaries, which reduced the number of provincial politicians from 130 to 103, and we amended the Municipal Act and encouraged municipalities to restructure as well through the Savings and Restructuring Act, and they have.

Through restructuring, many municipalities have gained the size, which means the tax base, and the administrative strength to reduce the cost of services to

their taxpayers. There have been many success stories. I'd like to itemize a few.

In Chatham-Kent there have been annual savings of \$11.4 million which are expected at maturity; the amalgamated single-tier county of Prince Edward expects to reach annual savings of \$1.36 million; and of course the new city of Toronto has held the line of taxes and has set a cumulative restructuring savings target of \$150 million over three years. Thus far, they have already achieved savings of \$120 million.

The township of Sable-Spanish River expects to save \$149,000 per year. The newly amalgamated city of Kenora, to come into effect on January 1, 2000, expects to save \$800,000 per year.

These are just a few examples. There are many more, because since 1996 our government has approved 118 locally derived, locally driven restructuring proposals. As a result of those proposals there are 229 fewer municipalities in Ontario today—we are down from 815 at the start of this process to 586 at present—and there are 1,059 fewer politicians, which is a 23% reduction. I'm excited about that. In fact, municipalities have told us that Ontario taxpayers can expect to save \$200 million annually as a result of the restructuring efforts carried out to date. This is a remarkable achievement.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate municipal elected officials throughout Ontario, and their staff, for being part of this achievement. They have taken some tough decisions. They have run with the ball. They have shown that restructuring can be done and done well. We look forward to the same result in the regional municipalities of Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury.

These municipalities are now in the midst of a 90-day period of local discussion and consultation. Our goal is to end the restructuring debate that has gone on for years in each of these areas. Our goal is to improve local government in these areas.

Provincially appointed special advisers have been leading this latest round of discussion and at the end of the 90 days, which will be later this month, the special advisers will submit their recommendations and our government will act.

Our plan is to introduce legislation before the Christmas break and, subject always to the approval of the Legislature, have the changes in place in time for the municipal elections of November 2000.

We think it is time for taxpayers in these four areas to benefit from simpler, more efficient and more accountable government. Taxpayers deserve more efficient government.

At this time I would also encourage municipalities in other regions to continue to look for ways to improve local government for the benefit of their own taxpayers.

At the same time as municipalities are looking at how they are structured, we are also beginning the fundamental shift in how services are delivered. Competition is being introduced into the public sector workplace and into local service delivery systems. Performance meas-

ures are letting taxpayers see how well their governments are doing, both in relation to last year and in comparison to similar municipalities throughout the province. This is called benchmarking, and of course benchmarking helps municipalities learn from each other in order to deliver services more efficiently and cost-effectively as well. This shift also means greater accountability. It means finding new and better ways to deliver services, and that means the taxpayer is the winner.

We created the Greater Toronto Services Board to manage GT Transit in the greater Toronto area and in Hamilton-Wentworth and to coordinate decision-making across the GTA. There are many success stories in terms of best practices. For example, my home region of Peel and the region of Halton have integrated their waste management contracts and have saved many millions of dollars. The Hamilton-Wentworth regional government has privatized its airport, resulting in significant savings for taxpayers. All of this is good news, and certainly our intention was that municipalities become more efficient, be more innovative, be more flexible and accountable to their taxpayers.

I want to talk a little bit about land use planning. That's also what the planning system needed, more efficiency, more innovation and more flexibility. Land use planning and development are of tremendous importance to the future of our province. They are an integrated part of our economic growth. Certainly a sensible planning system goes a long way to maintaining confidence in Ontario as a place to do business. Yet when we took office in 1995, Ontario's planning system was tied up in red tape. Getting through the planning approval process took too long and cost too much. Planners had to wade through more than 600 pages of provincial guidelines and a simple official plan amendment could take easily 405 days to complete.

We were determined to change all that. We wanted to concentrate on getting results rather than on the process by which these results were achieved. We wanted to give municipalities the autonomy they asked for and deserved. Local decision-makers needed to be able to implement provincial policy in ways that met their own community needs, and we wanted to offer a system that was less bureaucratic, that people could understand and that delivered an answer more quickly. We have addressed all these areas and issues, and our new planning system has been very successful. It's a system that is designed to recognize the principle that good planning is everyone's responsibility.

Municipalities have embraced their new roles and have welcomed their increased decision-making responsibilities. For example, last year community-based planning took hold as 80% of the population saw official plan amendments in their municipalities exempted from provincial approval. This means local autonomy. It means local accountability. It means responsibility for preserving one's local values.

This year, the ministry granted an additional 10 municipalities exemptions, bringing the total to more



than 50. The ministry also gave subdivision approval authority to 16 local councils and 17 planning boards and gave approval authority for consents to 27 northern municipalities.

Our ministry has continued to work on speeding up planning application decisions, and there are some remarkable comparisons that I'd like to share with you. For example, back in 1995 it took an average of 678 days to process an official plan. This year it averaged about 142 days. In 1995 it took an average of 1,006 days, almost three years, to approve plans for subdivisions. This year it averaged 190 days.

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As I said earlier, it used to take about 405 days to process an OPA, an official plan amendment; this year it averaged 106 days. Consents have gone from nine months to three and a half. As a result of these improvements, the ministry's planning approval activities have been reduced by more than 75%, and through our one-window approval process nearly 60% of all decisions have been made within our ministry, without the need to consult any of the other seven ministries with a stake in land use planning.

We're very pleased with the success of these reforms, and our ministry continues to work with municipalities, planning boards, the public and all proponents to make sure that Ontario's land use planning system works for all Ontarians in the best possible way.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I want to talk a little bit about the ice storm because it is reflected in our estimates, as no doubt committee members are aware.

**The Acting Chair (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Are you forecasting one, Minister?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No, I'm looking retrospectively. Thanks for the clarification.

Of course, one of the most extraordinary expenditures by my ministry this year has been on ice storm disaster relief assistance. As we all know, in January of last year a horrific ice storm battered parts of eastern Ontario. It was the largest natural disaster in Canadian history. Many lived without heat and proper shelter for days and even weeks. They relied on friends, they relied on neighbours and they relied on strangers throughout Ontario and from the rest of the country.

It's safe to say that all levels of government worked together to help people recover and to rebuild. Our government provided an immediate initial commitment of \$50 million. We established an emergency help fund, which paid out almost \$12 million in aid to individuals and municipalities during the emergency phase. We assisted farmers, we assisted small businesses, we assisted tourism operators and we made emergency repairs to restore the power grid. All claims from individuals, from farmers, from businesses have now been resolved.

Combined with reimbursements to municipalities, a forestry recovery program, reimbursements to other Ontario government ministries for repairs to hospitals, school boards, correctional facilities and highways, along with other expenditures, it is estimated that the govern-

ment will spend upwards of \$200 million on ice-storm-related damages. We do, however, expect to recover approximately 80% of eligible costs under the federal disaster financial assistance arrangements program.

Part of our assistance program was to help those who suffered emergency expenses and uninsured damages to essential properties as a result of the storm. Under the Ontario disaster relief assistance program, we provided up to \$4 for every dollar raised by the community.

Today I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Eastern Ontario Disaster Relief Committee for the excellent job they did. This committee was an umbrella group of volunteers, representing the eight local disaster relief committees in the affected area. They led this private property claims process. They put in a tremendous number of hours with a lot of commitment and a lot of hard work, and they did an exemplary job. The committee that I mentioned spearheaded all fundraising activities, and they successfully raised more than \$8 million, money that went directly to the ice storm's victims.

I would also like at this time to thank the Red Cross, which generously donated \$4 million to that total. The Eastern Ontario Disaster Relief Committee has settled almost 30,000 ice storm claims made by individuals, farmers and small businesses, and they have paid out more than \$52 million to the victims of ice storm. So many people pulled together to get eastern Ontario through this emergency and to restore it to economic vitality. Front-line workers, committee members, governments, people on the street, from start to finish it was a remarkable experience for all of us who were involved. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we hope we never again see another natural disaster of that magnitude in this province.

I would like to at this time, with your forbearance, turn to the housing side of my portfolio. In June 1998, our government proclaimed into law the Tenant Protection Act—some of you may have heard of that piece of legislation—which reformed Ontario's system of rent regulation, because we knew the previous system didn't work. Tenants frequently lived with inadequately maintained units: faucets dripped, roofs leaked, balconies needed repair, plaster was peeling off the ceiling—I could go on and on. Housing stock was increasingly becoming run down, yet there was no encouragement in the system for landlords to improve existing maintenance or build new buildings.

Our goal was to deliver a balanced system that worked for the landlords but also worked for the tenants and the taxpayer. We also wanted to get investment rolling, encourage building more rental stock and to simply get things moving again. Our new act combined six pieces of legislation that governed landlords, tenants and rent, as well as provisions within the Building Code Act and the Planning Act. We are very pleased with the initial results, although I would say for the record that more has to be done.



Landlords are spending more to maintain the rental stock, with Ontario now ranked second among regions of Canada for money spent on renovations. We're second in Canada; we want to be first, but so far we're second and moving up.

The new Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has proved to be very effective. This tribunal, to remind members, was set up to ensure a fair, more efficient process of hearing landlord-tenant disputes, moving them from the court system into a less formal system of mediation and adjudication. It has meant that disputes are heard much more quickly. It used to regularly take months and months to get a court date. Applicants are now generally getting their cases heard within three weeks. Members of the tribunal are getting their decisions out to the parties within two to three days.

In the first year of operation, the tribunal successfully mediated more than 5,000 applications, at a minimum cost to the taxpayers of Ontario. Another benefit, of course, is that this process has also made a dramatic reduction in the backlog to our provincial court system.

Under the Tenant Protection Act, tenants continue to be protected from unjust evictions. I would like to point out that, on a year-over-year basis, the overall number of applications to terminate a tenancy has remained constant, despite these changes that I've outlined. During the last year of the old provincial system, 60,200 applications regarding landlord and tenant issues were received. In the first year of the Tenant Protection Act, the tribunal received 60,550 applications, so a slight increase but statistically within bounds.

Under both systems, eviction applications made up approximately 70% of the total. The primary cause for application for eviction continues to be non-payment of rent. Additionally, statistics from the Superior Court of Justice show a slight decline in the number of writs of possession filed in the city of Toronto. I'm sure that's a great relief to our Toronto members on this panel.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I'm relieved.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you for saying that.

For the period between January and June, 1998, when the provincial court system was still in place, there were 4,077 writs filed. During the same period in 1999, under the Tenant Protection Act, only 4,054 writs were filed, a slight decrease.

The tribunal has been very effective in terms of resolving disputes between landlords and tenants and providing information about the Tenant Protection Act to the people of Ontario.

I would also like to inform this committee that the administration costs of the rent regulation system are 4.3% lower than they were three years ago under the previous system.

It's time to talk a little bit about encouraging rental construction. Our government has always known that addressing rent control was a fundamental part of encouraging new apartment construction. We also knew that it was not the only action necessary. That's why we

streamlined the entire land use planning system in the province and passed a new Planning Act. We cut back on the development charges that municipalities can load on to new housing, and we passed the new Development Charges Act.

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We reviewed the old building code, and we passed a new, updated building code that came into effect in 1998. We improved the property tax situation for the construction of new rental housing, and we announced the provincial sales tax grant program to encourage the construction of affordable rental housing across the province.

We also continue to press the federal government to change its policies with regard to the high GST on the construction of new apartments and to reduce the unfairly high mortgage interest premiums for the construction of rental housing.

Our government has set the stage. Clearly, it is an opportune time for the development of rental projects in downtown Toronto and across Ontario. We will continue to look for ways to remove barriers to construction and to encourage developers to build.

We can point to some successes. This year, there were 474 private rental starts in communities with low vacancy rates, such as Toronto and Windsor, almost double the target of 247 units—better, but not good enough. It takes time to turn around a system that had so many disincentives built into it that many developers gave up on Ontario altogether. I think we're on the right track now, and we intend to stay on it.

I am sure members would be happy to know that the final area I want to discuss today is social housing. Our government has always said that we were not interested in continuing the social housing boondoggle that existed when we took office. We got out of the so-called non-profit housing business. I don't know why it was called the "non-profit" housing business, because lawyers made profit, architects made profit and social planners made profit. Everybody was making profit, but there was a lack of affordability to the taxpayer.

We believe that the private sector can build housing better, faster and cheaper than we ever could. We have worked hard to deliver a more streamlined, cost-effective and accountable social housing program. We owe it to the taxpayers, who currently spend \$1.5 billion every year to subsidize social housing in this province; \$1.5 billion a year.

In the last year, we had achieved significant savings in the area of social housing. We have taken full advantage of the decline in interest rates and are averaging less than 6% on mortgage renewals.

Savings have also been found through the operational and cost efficiencies. This includes improving property management services and starting an asset-management process that allocates capital funding based on the need and the condition of the portfolio. We have managed to achieve lower costs without creating significant reductions to services.

We have also done a lot recently to benchmark social housing functions as another way to reduce costs. As you know, our government has always believed that social housing is a service that can best be provided at the local level. Municipalities have a long history of involvement in social housing, and they know best the needs of their own community. So, on January 1, 1998, we transferred the funding responsibility for social housing to municipalities, as part of the local services realignment. As part of the exchange in responsibilities under LSR, the province cut in half the education portion of the residential education property tax and provided more than \$1 billion in funding to municipalities to help them assume their new responsibilities.

With this new division of responsibilities, local governments can now pay the costs of Ontario's 231,000 units of social housing. I am pleased to say that these costs have fallen by 15% compared to three years ago. Maintaining a unit of public housing is now less than \$233 per month, which was our original target, and the cost per unit in non-profit and co-op housing built after 1985 is now down to \$655 per month.

In order to fully devolve the administration of social housing to municipalities, we need to reach a federal-provincial housing agreement. We expect that that agreement will be finalized soon.

**The Acting Chair:** Minister, you have about two minutes.

**Hon Mr Clement:** As this brief survey of our ministry's initiatives and achievements shows, our accomplishments have been many. We have opened the windows and let in some new ideas. Our goal is to work hard to ensure that Ontario is made of strong communities with efficient local governments committed to excellence. We have to have accountability to taxpayers and responsiveness to local needs. We will continue to work hard to ensure a housing market that is healthy and competitive.

I would like to conclude by saying that our ministry and our government will continue to do our best for all the people of Ontario, and we look forward to the challenge in the months and years ahead. I thank you for your time and your indulgence.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Minister. We'll continue with the Liberal caucus, which will have 30 minutes.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Could we go right to questions?

**The Acting Chair:** It's your 30 minutes.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Mr Chair, I'd like to start. I have some questions for the minister. I'm going to start where I left off in question period in the House today. I asked a question of the Chair of Management Board about the announcement that was made back in March of this year by the Minister of Community and Social Services that certain government lands and properties would be sold for the purpose of providing affordable housing.

Today in the House, the minister responded that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can provide specific details about affordable housing projects and land. I want to ask the minister to provide those details of where the land is, how many units are being created and any other details that may exist.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you, Mr Caplan, for your question. It was, I think, an important component of last March's announcement, and I would be pleased at this time to give you an update for the purposes of this committee. Perhaps my staff will have some additional thoughts on this.

From our perspective, we are still very much committed to the announcement that was made on March 23. We think the government can play a role in identifying properties that are suitable for a homelessness initiative, that are suitable for the construction of housing units that will assist us in dealing with this terrible problem we face in many communities. I think that's important to say, that this is a problem that has received a lot of attention in Toronto, and deservedly so, but it's also a problem in my community and it's a problem I'm sure in other members' communities as well.

The intention to proceed is still there. What I would like to share with the member, though, is a little bit of the complexity of the task involved, because if we're going to do it right, there are a number of issues that have to be sorted out, not only with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing but with our sister ministries as well.

A lot of it has to do with what sorts of lands are not only available—that's easy, to get an inventory of available lands—but which lands are best suited, which are even suitable for this particular style of project, because you want lands that, first of all, have the right kinds of services available to them in terms of water services or other hard infrastructural services. You also want lands that have the right kind of public transportation available to them so that someone—

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** On a point of order, Mr Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** One second. The clock stopped. OK. We're just trying to make my job easier, that's all. If the answers could be kept as pointed and brief as possible, I suspect it will help them. If there are questions you ask where you wouldn't mind having the answer delivered later, that will also provide more time to you.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I apologize, Chair. I felt unconstrained by question period rules, and I got a bit carried away.

**The Acting Chair:** There you go.

**Mr Caplan:** I did ask a very specific question. The Chair of Management Board was very specific, that there is a detailed list of lands that have been set aside for affordable housing that this minister could provide. He went into some kind of philosophical debate or discussion. I want the detailed list of lands that you have set aside for the provision of affordable housing, as per the



response—and it is in Hansard today—of the Chair of Management Board. Does that exist, yes or no?

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**Hon Mr Clement:** The answer is a bit more complex than yes or no, and with the indulgence of the Chair—

**Mr Caplan:** That's not what the Chair of Management Board said. Does the list exist?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me answer the question. I'd be happy to do that. There is a list of potential sites—

**Mr Caplan:** Will you provide that list?

**Hon Mr Clement:** —but again the issue that we are faced with, that we have the obligation to face as a government, is which sites are the most appropriate and make the most sense. We're committed to 500 units of shelter being available, but the issue is, where do you build them that it makes the most sense to meet the need, to ensure that the services are available there, that the transportation is available there and that folks who live there have access to jobs and opportunity? I think that's important as well.

**Mr Caplan:** The question is, will the minister provide that list?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Which list is that, sir?

**Mr Caplan:** You say you have a list of properties available for the building of affordable housing. Will you provide that list? Is that yes or no?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, I guess if it's available, we can provide it for sure.

**Mr Caplan:** OK. I'll be expecting that list to be provided here at the estimates committee.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, but let me just state for the record what this list is.

**The Acting Chair:** The minister has undertaken—

**Hon Mr Clement:** For the record, this is a list of Ontario Realty Corp potential properties which may not be appropriate for housing. If you want the list that is appropriate for housing, that list cannot be provided at this time.

**Mr Caplan:** The Chair of Management Board was very specific, Mr Chair, and I say through you to the minister—

**The Acting Chair:** I think the point has been made.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: The member across is cross-examining continually and putting words into the mouth of the minister about what happened today.

**The Acting Chair:** That's not really a point of order. You'll find that's what this is, to interrogate the minister.

**Mr Mazzilli:** But when the member doesn't get the answer he likes—

**The Acting Chair:** That's not a point of order. Now let's move this along.

**Mr Caplan:** I have many further questions, Mr Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** OK, in order to move it along.

**Mr Caplan:** Minister, in your opening remarks you said that "we"—I take it that is the government and yourself as minister—believe that the private sector can build affordable housing. Are you familiar with a gentleman by the name of Greg Lampert?

**Hon Mr Clement:** The name rings a bell, yes.

**Mr Curling:** The Lampert report.

**Mr Marchese:** Al Leach would know.

**Mr Caplan:** Yes, of course Al Leach would know. Greg Lampert is an economic consultant who has often been hired by your ministry to advise on matters of housing policy. This is a report that he prepared. I believe that you or your ministry have it. It's entitled Cost-Effective Housing Assistance: Comparison of Cost of Non-Profit Housing Shelter Allowance. This is another report, a follow-up prepared for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, The Economics of Investment in New Rental Housing. In his report he explicitly states that there is no economic case for the private sector to build public housing. I would like you to tell me where you come to the conclusion that you believe that the private sector can build affordable housing in this province.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I want staff to have an opportunity to respond in detail, but my recollection of that report is that the conclusion was a bit different from the member's synopsis of the conclusion, if I can put it that way. There are a lot of factors that go into whether or not low-income housing is financially feasible.

Two of the aspects of it are the GST issue and the CMHC issue. Those are aspects of whether it makes it possible or not possible to do that. It depends on the parameters that you put into play, whether or not something is possible for the private sector to do. As I said before, it's going to take all governments working together, and your help would be very much appreciated as well. If we can work together on this, I'm sure we can find a solution.

**Mr Caplan:** I would suggest that the minister read a report commissioned by his own ministry just this year—it's not even a year old—which concludes conclusively, and I can read the passages to you, if you'd like, that there is no economic case for private construction of affordable housing.

I have several other questions so I'm going to move on.

Your predecessor had said, at the time of the passage of the so-called Tenant Protection Act, that 10,000 new rental units would be built in Ontario within the next two years. Obviously that has not come to pass. I think you gave us a figure of 474 this past year. I'd like you to tell me how many you believe will be created in the year 2000, how many rental units you are expecting to be created in Ontario.

**Hon Mr Clement:** With all due respect, I'm not in the prognostication business here. I will tell the member that we will have many more units if we can get the feds to reduce the GST. We'll have many more units if they can get some insurance issues from the CMHC sorted out. There are lots of factors that can make this a much better story than 474 units. If he's asking me whether 474 units is acceptable as a goal, it is not. It is not acceptable. We have much more work to do.

But I would say this to the member: The Lampert report, which he is so keen on quoting, said that the results of the provincial initiatives have moved the agenda



forward on private sector affordable housing being created, but the main stumbling block is our federal friends in the House of Commons. If he wants to help us out, he just has to make a short trip over to his federal MP, who happens to be a Liberal, and I'm sure they can provide us with a bit more news.

**Mr Caplan:** It's very interesting that the minister's predecessor was fully prepared to have a specific target of rental housing that would be built in this province. Obviously, with the result of a lot of restructuring, a lot of legislative change, this minister isn't prepared at all to have any target for this province. I find that rather shocking at a time when we have an absolute crisis in affordable housing in this province.

I have several other questions. For example, in your estimates book there are all kinds of income tests and checks that are made for tenants for various shelter subsidies, rent supplement units. Would the minister please advise me what he feels the acceptable percentage of income the tenants should be paying towards their accommodation cost. Is it 10%, 20%, 50%? What per cent of income is acceptable to this minister, to this government?

**Interjection:** More.

**Mr Caplan:** More.

**Hon Mr Clement:** The government's position is 30%.

**Mr Caplan:** Thirty per cent. The minister will know that the results of the second phase of the study came out less than two weeks ago, which indicated that over half of Ontario's tenants are paying in excess of 30% of their combined household income on accommodation; in fact, 25% of tenants are paying more than 50% of their income. Is that acceptable to this minister?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No, and that's why we have a broken system that we're trying to fix. I think the honourable member and I are finally on the same side. The system that created that is the old, failed, broken system that we are trying to fix. Our problem is, after 25 years of that kind of mentality that the honourable member's government, when it was in power, represented and then was added to like barnacles to a ship by the previous government to us in 1995, that we've got a dysfunctional housing market that we are desperately trying to fix and we know it is going to take some time to do so.

Are we on the right track? Yes, we are. Is it going to take some time to get to a functional housing market that has the right incentives for the right people to build the right housing for our citizenry? We are seeing improvements, but there is more work to be done. I'm glad the honourable member has that point about how rotten the old system was, because I agree with him 100%.

**Mr Caplan:** In fact the information is very current, that the crisis in affordable housing is growing under the watch of this government over the past five years. It is very clear and it is borne out in Statistics Canada data and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp data that 40% of Ontarians are tenants in Ontario; 20% of Ontarians are paying more in their accommodation costs than this minister and the government consider acceptable. Yet

what has this government done? It has gutted rent controls in the province, it has stopped providing any affordable housing and any non-profit and social housing projects. This minister has not given any confidence that these problems will be alleviated.

I have some other questions, Mr Chair.

In the estimates there are several references to the termination of rent supplement units as their agreements come to term. The minister will confirm this, yes? How many rent supplement agreements have been terminated in the past year and how many do you anticipate will be terminated in the next year?

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**Hon Mr Clement:** While we get a specific answer to that, let me also comment on the rental supplement, because the member made that point. I made reference in my remarks to the social housing agreement that we aspire to sign with the federal government. Upon the signing of that agreement, it will allow us the freedom for an additional 10,000 families to get rental supplements. So if the honourable member has any influence at all in Ottawa, if he knows anyone, a family member perhaps or a friend who sits in the House of Commons, please encourage them to get the federal government to sign the social housing agreement and we could get an additional 10,000 families helped out on rent sups. I'm encouraged by his remarks—

**Mr Caplan:** So the minister is telling me that the provincial government is prepared to cut back on rent supplement units that they provide, but they require federal cash to be able to provide new rent supplement units. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No, we're just trying to get the deal that every other province in the Dominion has had.

**Mr Caplan:** In your—

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me answer the question, Mr Chair, because I believe there was a question buried in there.

**The Acting Chair:** Could we have just a little bit of order and we'll hear the answer to the question, please.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I guess under the previous government, which I believe was the NDP government, 176 were terminated. That was the policy that did that, not any particular member of the NDP, I would hasten to add. As a result of those terminations, some money was freed up which was then plowed back into supportive housing.

**Mr Caplan:** In your estimates you indicate over \$1 million, about \$1.5 million, has been reduced because of the termination of rent supplement agreements. How many units is that—that was the question—and how many are you forecasting to reduce next year? I'm still awaiting an answer to those two questions.

I'm also very interested in the minister's earlier reply, that the provincial government, while terminating rent supplement units—by the way, they cut shelter allowances as well, as a part of the general reduction in welfare and social assistance, so let's be very clear about the actions this government has taken.

Clearly the Harris government and this minister are not prepared to live up to their commitments to provide affordable housing. They're looking to off-load this on to another level of government, and are you telling me, Minister, that an investment will only be made if another government comes up with some cash? Is that your response?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I'm saying I want the same deal as every other province in the Dominion. Somehow Ontario hasn't got this deal yet. We have 101 federal Liberal MPs in the House of Commons, and yet we don't have a deal on social housing so that we can free up some money for 10,000 families to have rental supplements.

My only point was, if the honourable member knows anybody in Ottawa who can help us with that, please use his excellent advocacy skills to get us some action on this. That would be very helpful for the people of Ontario.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm still awaiting an answer to my first two questions. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, but believe you me, I will be—

**Hon Mr Clement:** I didn't give up the floor.

**Mr Caplan:** —making some additional comments regarding housing and this government's lack of—

**Hon Mr Clement:** Mr Chair, I'm willing to answer the question, if the honourable member would give me some time.

**The Acting Chair:** I think he's indicated that we're going to move on.

Mr Colle.

**Mr Caplan:** I've asked twice.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Here's the answer once.

**The Acting Chair:** I've recognized Mr Colle.

**Mr Colle:** Minister, I have a question in a little different direction. In the last number of years, just before you came to the ministry, there's been a great deal of upheaval in municipal affairs throughout the province. We've had restructuring, we've had seven property tax bills and we've had 148—and I saw another today—regulations in the changing of how property taxes are collected in the province. Do you know how many municipalities have not issued their 1998 property tax bills in the province?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Gosh, I think I'd have to ask Ernie Eves that particular question. I don't think we have that information at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Mr Colle:** Maybe your staff has—

**Hon Mr Clement:** We might try to find out whether it's in the package, sir, but that's something that's typically handled by the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Marchese:** We should have Ernie Eves here.

**Hon Mr Clement:** You had your opportunity.

**Mr Colle:** Can we get that from staff?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I'm afraid we don't have the number offhand, but perhaps we can undertake in the spirit of co-operation to—

**Mr Colle:** Yes, can you get that for me, the number of municipalities that have not issued their 1998 tax bills?

**Hon Mr Clement:** We'll try to find out whether that number is present in the government. It may not be present in the government, but we will see whether we can—

**Mr Colle:** It would have to be there, because as partners in the funding of education, you're an integral part of that now. So you would have to have those figures. I'd be surprised if you didn't have that. I'd be shocked, in fact, if you didn't have those figures.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Nothing shocks me any more, but we'll undertake to try to get that information.

**Mr Colle:** And how about 1999 tax bills? How many municipalities are there that have not issued 1999 tax bills?

**Hon Mr Clement:** If we don't have the 1998 information here in this room, we'll undertake to see what information is available.

**Mr Colle:** I wonder if I could get that made available to me, for 1998 and 1999.

**Mr Marchese:** By when?

**Mr Colle:** If I could have that for tomorrow. I'm sure I could have it: 1998 must be there, 1999 must be there, because we're almost into the 2000 tax bill.

What I'm worried about is a lot of municipalities haven't issued a tax bill for 1998 or 1999 and won't be issuing a tax bill until the year 2000, covering basically three years. I just wonder, Minister, if you're aware of the pressure that's going to put on the municipalities, not to mention the taxpayers who basically have no idea what they owe because of all the changes in legislation? Have you thought of the impact this is going to have on the taxpayers who may have a little store or a little home and they haven't received a tax bill for two and a half years? Has any action been taken to protect the taxpayer from this confusion?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think my deputy would like to answer part of this question.

**Mr Michael Fenn:** As the member will be aware, there's a fairly extensive program that's been undertaken by the government to ensure that the cost of tax billing will be supported by the government and the rebilling that's associated with ensuring that business taxpayers are not unduly affected by the—

**Mr Colle:** Mr Chair, I can't hear. I know members across maybe aren't interested in this, but a lot of people have been phoning my office about the fact they haven't got a property tax bill in two years and they're still waiting for that tax bill.

**The Acting Chair:** I appreciate your problem, Mr Colle. I'll ask both sides, because I've heard everybody in this committee speak out of turn at one time or another, if you'll listen for the answer.

Mr Fenn.

**Mr Fenn:** As the member will be aware from speaking to his constituents, municipalities have been advising business taxpayers that there will be a final tax bill covering the periods involved going out very soon. We certainly, in our ministry, have provided the data required to issue those tax bills. We've urged municipalities to



proceed with that and they are doing so. That is one of the reasons that there is the response the member is hearing about. It's moving ahead efficiently. We've had large numbers of municipalities now in a position where they are billing.

The schedule for the billing is a concern to us, as it is to municipalities, and we've been investing a great deal of staff time, computer assistance and support with the billing process. It's our view that the municipalities have done a good job of advising their business taxpayers that in fact the bills are coming, and prudently they would be setting aside the money to pay the property taxes on their businesses, as they do each year.

**Mr Colle:** In terms of this property tax collection, you put in this Ontario property tax analysis software across the province. How much has that cost the provincial government, the introduction of the system, the consultants that have been brought on board? What's the total cost of that program to date?

**Mr Fenn:** I would answer the question in two parts. There is an extensive program, as the member will be aware, in terms of covering the interest costs and the billing costs associated with this. That's an expenditure that the government has authorized to be paid to municipalities to help them with the process.

The direct cost to us, separate and apart from staff time and some of those kinds of activities, I believe is something in the area of \$1.4 million for the computer programs and the CDs that have been sent to over 450 municipalities, I believe it is. That process is ongoing.

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**Mr Colle:** Does that include the cost of the people developing the programs, the software development? You're saying it's \$1.4 million?

**Mr Fenn:** I don't have the numbers right at hand because, in part, some of those costs are incurred of course by the Ministry of Finance, associated with its responsibilities in this area. Some are directly responsible for the computer programming and the software amendments that have been necessary to adjust for the legislation changes to which the member referred earlier.

**Mr Colle:** Therefore, just part of the cost of the Ontario property tax analysis software is borne by your ministry and some costs would be borne by the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Fenn:** Again, with the members' indulgence, I'm not sure exactly how the cost distribution on the computer program is done between us and the Ministry of Finance, but I believe that's our share of the cost and it would represent the lion's share of the cost.

**Mr Colle:** OK. I just want to ask: Minister, have you had concerned municipalities saying that this software is not working, that basically the software can't keep up to the 148 changes in the property tax system in the last two years? Have you had any concerns—

**Hon Mr Clement:** I personally have not had any correspondence or any verbal discussions with heads of municipalities in that regard, but if the member wishes to

send me any concerns that he's heard, I'd be happy to follow up on it.

**Mr Colle:** In terms of another area here I'd like to ask, has the Ministry of Municipal Affairs done any cost breakdown in terms of the impact of sprawl and what it would cost municipalities and the provincial government in terms of the lack of control of sprawl? Maybe the minister has seen some reports. Has there been any kind of dollar figure put on it?

We know the Golden report said that if you don't have certain corridors of development, you're going to pay in extra sewers, extra road construction, extra schools, extra public facilities. Has the ministry done any breakdown of that in the last year or so? Has any report or any analysis been done of that?

**Mr Fenn:** What I would offer is that, as the member will be aware, most municipalities have gone through a process of developing a development charges study over the last year and as part of that review they have identified areas where they will experience capital cost pressures associated with growth. That has led to a number of conclusions about the cost of incremental growth and the form of incremental growth and that has, in turn, reflected itself in the planning policies they have developed and in the financing policies for new development. In that sense, we are encouraging municipalities to look at those kinds of issues, to make decisions on land use that reflect—

**Mr Colle:** But there's been no comprehensive costing done in terms of the cost of development that isn't contained, let's say in the areas of the 905?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, you know, you get into a definitional issue too. I don't know what "sprawl" means or what have you. I will say this though, Michael, if I can: Certainly on the transportation issues, as the former Minister of Transportation, there were provincial or joint studies that showed the cost associated with traffic congestion, which is partially attributable to sprawl, if you want to use that terminology, and the cost in the GTA of congestion in terms of pure productivity loss, let alone the cyclical costs of loss of quality of life, is upwards of \$2 billion per year. So I think you could probably find out there, and we have lots of academic experts—

**Mr Colle:** I'm more interested in the hard costs, obviously in terms of more wages paid, more fuel consumed, time lost, etc. I just wonder if the ministry somehow has gotten hold of any hard costs. I'm talking about sewers, roads, public facilities.

**Hon Mr Clement:** There's a lot of academic interest in these issues and we probably rely, like everyone else who is interested in this area—there are a lot of urban planners working on their PhDs—

**Mr Colle:** But there's nothing comprehensive across parts of our regional plans, regional analyses, in terms of what the cost is going to be to the taxpayer when this growth takes place without any kinds of corridors of planning rather than this American-style sprawl?

**The Acting Chair:** We have one minute.



**Mr Colle:** There are generally studies that—

**Mr Fenn:** Two points: The member referred to the region-wide reviews by individual regional municipalities. Certainly, that's being undertaken as part of the development charges review. When the government announced the creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board, it was in part a reflection of the review that had been done prior to that and one of the academic studies that was done during that period was the study that Pamela Blais did for the greater Toronto area, looking at the estimated cost of sprawl across the whole GTA.

**Mr Colle:** Has your ministry done a follow-up to that or have you tracked that at all?

**Mr Fenn:** What I would say is that looking at it comprehensively gives you an indication that certain policies should be applied, but the way that is best employed is in direct individual municipal jurisdictions to control the costs, municipality by municipality, region by region. That's the approach that works best in terms of identifying the cost.

**Mr Colle:** The province has a mandate to integrate these services and make sure there's cohesion. You haven't done any of that?

**Mr Fenn:** Mr Chairman, we're not involved in central planning, so we don't analyze those issues in that form.

**Mr Colle:** So you haven't done an integrated approach at all?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, time.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think we've answered your question, Mike, to the best of our ability.

**The Acting Chair:** No, don't get excited. We're going to give you your due course too.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Colle:** Do you mind if I interrupt you when you're talking too?

**The Acting Chair:** Time's up. We get that from time to time. I'm sorry, the time is up. We're moving on to the next caucus.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Kormos will begin the comments.

**Mr Kormos:** I'm not a member of this committee, but I'm here as a right pursuant to the standing orders and I'm grateful to the very capable Mr Rosario Marchese for letting me use some of his time.

Minister, the municipal and regional politicians down in Niagara—that's the Niagara Peninsula, the Niagara region—are all in a flurry because they understand you to have at least implied or suggested to them that they've got to start amalgamation processes speedily. Are they correct in that understanding?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, I guess they are correct. What I've said to some media in the Niagara area as well as to some of the local members there is that we're always looking for ways to encourage the provision of better services for less to the taxpayers, more accountability, and reducing the size of government, reducing the complexity of government. So if there are locally generated ideas that wish to be given consideration by the government of Ontario, I would encourage them to commence that as soon as possible.

The context of the question that was asked of me was in relation to the August 23 announcement by the ministry that Oxford, Niagara, Waterloo and Muskoka were definitely areas where we are encouraging restructuring. The context in which I was asked the question was in relation to a potential restructuring before the next municipal elections. We know that those are November 2000, so certainly time is ticking.

**Mr Kormos:** And if those municipalities don't want to amalgamate, are you going to force them to do so?

**Hon Mr Clement:** This process that we announced here was that certainly we were looking to local municipalities, local stakeholders, local citizens to initiate something that they feel comfortable with. That's the process that has been initiated by this ministry.

**Mr Kormos:** And if they feel comfortable with the status quo, will you respect that?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Again, if they feel that the best way to achieve better government—less government for less cost to the taxpayer but better government and more accountability—then that's something we would have to assess. It's our responsibility to respond to that, so I don't want to answer a hypothetical at this point. We'd have to see what they came up with.

**Mr Kormos:** But you tell us that you believe in local autonomy. I was correct in hearing you say that?

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**Hon Mr Clement:** We believe that these should be locally initiated in the first instance, because that is where a lot of the input can occur and be very positive. We think we have a responsibility to all the taxpayers in Ontario. What we're looking for are proposals that mean that the taxpayers have savings. If you're asking me if someone comes to us with a proposal that doesn't mean taxpayer savings, doesn't mean greater accountability, doesn't mean getting better services for less, then that's not much of a process, in my estimation. I will say that right up front.

**Mr Kormos:** This is not a question. I put to you that municipalities like Thorold, Pelham, Port Colborne, the small municipalities in Niagara region, have some of the most attractive property tax venues, if you will, some of the lowest property taxes, in contrast to the bigger cities. They also have an incredibly strong sense of community. I couldn't begin to imagine how my colleague from the riding of Niagara Falls will explain to people in Niagara-on-the-Lake that they're going to be merged into a larger city and lose their unique identity. I can't for the life of me understand how my colleague from Erie-Lincoln, south and west of me, is going to explain to his constituents how an amalgamation and loss of identity is going to help Port Colborne or Fort Erie—again, small-town Ontario; very unique and with some very exceptional qualities.

I plead with you, and I put this to you: It is incredibly unfair and a denial of local autonomy for the provincial government to tell local municipalities, which have long histories and which are doing quite well, thank you, how to address the issue of local governance. I also put to you

that if you truly believe in democratic resolution of issues, you then will respect the democratic rights of those municipalities, as expressed through their leadership, to make those determinations about governance.

I would also say this: If the issue is forced before the 2000 municipal election, that means that it would be an issue determined by municipal and regional councillors and leaders—to wit, mayors and regional chair—without ever having put the matter to the people over the course of an election. I would put to you that the ministry should just hold on to its horses in sufficient time for a municipal election so that candidates for positions of chair of regional government or municipal government or mayors of municipalities can make their views known so that the electorate can, through that process, make some decisions about the future of their municipalities. I plead with you to take that step and to send a message out promptly to the region that you understand that this process may take a considerable amount of time and that this process should also be one where people put the issue to the electorate by way of their respective campaigns.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you for your input. I appreciate that.

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to suggest that if the staff of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have other things to do for the next 20 minutes or so, they might use it more productively—unless they want to listen to me for the next little while.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think it's important that you're here.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Since they're so much a part of the decision-making process around here. They have so many other important things to do, but the minister needs them in case there's some complicated question.

Chair, I have no questions of the minister, because, you see, I know the answers. So it seems stupid for me to ask questions for which I know the answers. I'm just going to talk to him for a while.

**Mr Colle:** You don't know the answers, do you?

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, we do. I asked him a question in the House just the other day about the need around social housing, and he said: "Are you kidding? We're now spending more on housing than any other government before." I couldn't believe my ears.

I have to tell you, first of all, Minister: Your decision—as a government, not you—to devolve housing responsibilities to the municipal sector is the most moronic thing that has happened in a long, long time in this place. You may argue, "It's a wonderful thing, and don't you trust municipal politicians, because aren't they so very capable, and shouldn't they, because they're so much closer to the public, have responsibility for this?" You might argue that. I tell you, it is the stupidest thing I have ever heard of—and for a variety of reasons.

One, you the province should hold on to that responsibility, because you are the one that has the money to be able to take care of the needs around housing, not the municipality. The municipality's source of funding for

housing comes from the property tax. As you know, there are a lot of seniors who live in their homes. They pay as much tax as anybody else, depending on the size of their home, whether they've had an opportunity to renovate it and so on. These poor folks have only their houses as assets. Many of them don't have extra income. Many of the seniors are very poor, but they pay a whole lot of money in property taxes.

We argue that the best way to provide for housing is through the provincial sector. Why? Because it's a more progressive tax system. It's based on an income tax system that's supposed to be a little more progressive. When you shift that responsibility down to the municipal level, the only money they will get, that they have, comes from the property tax base, which we know is not a progressive way to fund housing, or any other thing, for that matter.

I wanted to tell you from the beginning that very few jurisdictions in the world have the responsibility, generally speaking, for housing; it's mostly in the hands of the provinces or states or national governments. You might be able to find an example or two somewhere in the world where they do that, but by and large I argue that it's a moronic thing to have done. That's the first point I wanted to make.

Secondly, your predecessor, M. Leach, talked about the need to change the system because there were so many things we needed to fix in order to get the private sector to construct housing in general. M. Leach and your government were wrong then and you are wrong now, because we're not seeing any construction whatsoever. This bill has been in place for two years. You might argue for the next two years that you'll need four years, you'll need eight years, you'll need 10 years before the private sector gets in. The reality at the moment is that nobody is building; you're building very little.

The reality is that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says we're going to need 80,000 units to be built by 2001. By 2001, we will have built a projected number of 6,000 units. At the moment we've built about 3,000 units. From 1996 to 2001, we will need 80,000 units; we will have built only 6,000. We're seriously short of the required number of units we're going to need. In my view, it's a national disaster. In my view, it's a provincial disaster. In my view, the private sector will not get in for a long time.

By the way, your M. Lampert did say that the private sector should be doing it. He does say that, if I recall. I forget on what page in the report it says that. But you'll have to do a whole lot of things before the private sector can come and build. The elimination of rent control was only a small component of the \$3,000 gap that he said existed between what it takes to build and what people could afford to pay or would have to be able to afford to pay in order to have the private sector build. He said there was a \$3,000 gap. In order to get rid of the \$3,000 gap, he listed about eight to 10 things that you would have to do. The elimination of rent control alone, he said, eliminates only about \$200 out of that \$3,000 gap. You



didn't completely eliminate rent control, you simply de-controlled rents, so presumably you've only got anywhere from \$100 to \$150 reduced from that \$3,000 gap. But it's a big gap.

The private sector is going to need a whole lot of things in order for them to start building, Minister. I don't know whether you know that or not. But a \$3,000 gap is not easy to accomplish. The GST elimination is only one area, and PST is only another little area. I forget his list, but it's in that report on page 6 or 7, if I recall. To get to that whole list is going to take a whole lot.

My view is this: If you're going to have to give the private sector so much of what they ask for them to build, I say we, the public sector, should be building it. You know why? Because at the end of the day, that housing stock would be ours and not the private sector's. If it takes so much for us as a government to give away so the private sector can own the housing stock, I say it's not worth giving it to them. Why should they be able to have control of the housing stock to do what they want with at the end of the day after we, as the public sector, said, "No problem, we'll clear the way for you. These are all the things you want? We're going to give it all to you"? You will say it's not a public cost at all; I argue it's a public cost. I'm not willing to give the private sector all they want in order to have them own the stock and for them to be able to build.

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The reality is that they're not building at the moment, and they won't build simply by all the measures you will take alone, because you're going to have to involve the federal government, and you know that. The federal government has said since 1993 that they're not in the housing business either, like you guys. You guys started a bit later, in 1995. They made some announcements just the other day. They leaked a report saying they're going to kick in some money for housing. We'll wait and see what that money looks like, in what form and how that would be spent; we don't know. But if they release approximately \$700 million, it goes a long way to producing the kind of housing that we desperately need. But that won't be enough. They're going to need you. I'm not sure where you're going to stand once they make that announcement public, but it certainly goes a long way. Maybe they're beginning, at the federal level, to listen to the level of need that we have in the housing sector.

You guys are not building, the private sector is not building, and therefore we have a crisis on our hands. What does the crisis consist of? It consists of many things. First of all, people are paying more now than ever before in their rents. These folks who did the study, and you know who they are, have documented that in *Where's Home?* Part 2. They did a previous report six months ago and this is the Part 2 document, commissioned by a number of people: the Co-operative Housing Federation; the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association; the city of Toronto was part of that, *Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda*. They are tracking the prob-

lem, which you are unwilling or unable to do; I suspect unwilling to do, because you probably have the resources to do it.

A few groups are out there commissioning these studies to track problems, and without them we wouldn't know, except by hearsay. What are they tracking? They're tracking that rents are going up; and rents are going up beyond inflation. You will know that most people's wages have been frozen for the last 10 years. In some cases and in some sectors, some people are getting increases, but most of the people are still at that level where they haven't seen an increase in a long time. Inflation has been steady and has been there, but the level of wage increases has not. Rent increases have been higher than inflation and higher than what people have been getting through their wages, so you've got a double whammy of a problem, right? We've got wages not increasing, inflation going up and rents going higher than inflation. It creates a problem. You can see it. It's logical; it's hard to deny. It's hard to deny because the studies have been done, and they clearly show that this is a universal problem that is happening across Ontario and not just in Toronto, because it's good for government sometimes to dismiss the problem as simply a Toronto-specific thing. What they've documented is that this problem exists all over.

What they're also documenting is that in some areas there's a shrinking supply of housing and a vacancy rate that is not as low as it is here in Toronto, for example. But even there, where you would expect the marketplace to take over and competition in terms of vacancy rates to take over and therefore reduce rents, it isn't working. In fact, even where you have a high vacancy rate and normally you would expect rent increases to go down because you have a high vacancy rate, they've said it isn't the case, which is the usual philosophical, political thing the Tories would say: If you have a high vacancy rate, rents will go down. It's not working. Rents are going higher and higher everywhere, even where you don't expect them to go up.

You're seeing an increase in rents all over. You're seeing a decrease in wages all over. You're seeing above-guideline increases happening all over, where the private sector, those poor landlords are saying: "We don't have enough money. We need more and more to be able to care for the buildings because we suffered so much under the NDP that we need to be able to get those rates up." So you've got above-guideline increases happening. I'll come back to that in a second.

Then you've got the Rental Housing Protection Act, which has disappeared, therefore making it easier for the owners of rental buildings to demolish, which constitutes about 1,000 units of rental accommodation that's about to be demolished or they're in the process of demolishing, and very little supply coming in.

You've got about a quarter of the population who rent who pay over 50% of their income on rent alone.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Home-owners do too, you know; they pay more than 50%.

**Mr Marchese:** Homeowners are—I'll come back to that if I have time.

So a quarter of the population renting pays more than 50% of their income on rent alone. Now more than 50% means it could be 60%, it could be 70%. It's a whole lot of people who are having a hell of a difficult time meeting their human needs beyond simply having a place to stay. I'm painting a picture of the seriousness of the problem that we're facing.

In response to that point you said, "Well, you see that's why we're here trying to fix the problem." I don't know how you would do that, I really don't. This problem is not fixable by you and your policies. The so-called tenant protection package is not helping these people whom I have alluded to. They're paying a whole lot of money on rent alone, and your so-called Tenant Protection Act isn't helping that and cannot, and you've said nothing by way of what your government could do to fix this problem that convinces me that you understand the problem and/or how this might be alleviated somehow.

When you have a few more moments later on you might tell me how you're fixing the problem, because they know that, rhetorically speaking, you can say as you often say, and other ministers in the House, "We're fixing the problem." I don't know what problem you're fixing, but you're fixing something. The public doesn't know how you're fixing it. They think you're fixing something because you say you're fixing it, but those of us who are in the business know that it's just a game that governments play, at least some governments more than others. So I know you can't fix this problem through your policies and through your politics.

I'm actually desperate for a whole lot of Ontarians. I feel the desperation for them. I'm lucky enough that I have a wage as an MPP, that I won't starve, that I won't be thrown out of my house—I've got a house; I'm not renting. I'm lucky enough to be able to provide for some other needs like clothing, some recreational activities with my children, my daughter who likes music, she likes to sing, and my son who likes to play hockey. I'm fortunate enough that my salary, although it doesn't go far enough to pay for the tuition fees for my daughter who is in university—my other daughter will go to university next year—it's not enough for that, is at least taking care of some other human needs which for some might be considered basic.

I don't know how you worry about them, I'm sure you worry for some of these people, but I don't know how through your policies you worry about these people who don't have any luxuries at all, because most of the money they have goes to pay rent. I want to know, when you have your opportunity, how you respond to those human needs in a practical way so that I feel better, at least, at some attempt of yours to say: "Yeah, we do worry about these people. Yeah, they're having a hard time. Yeah, their wages are not as high as ours, you're quite right and we worry about them." Then tell me, if you worry about

them, how you are actually going to help them in some way.

That the Americans are spending a whole lot of money on housing, and I want to say that because you Tories usually look down there for answers on a whole lot of things. Whenever you have a welfare kind of idea you go to the US for your ideas, right?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Their welfare state doesn't measure up to ours in any way, shape or form.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course not. No, because you guys are really good. You're the best, right? You take up a bad idea that the Americans have and you make it better. I understand that.

Why can't you guys just take this good idea here, that the Americans are spending billions of dollars—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** They've got far more poverty than we have.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, and they're spending so much money on these issues. I don't understand it.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yeah, how is that?

1710

**Mr Marchese:** I don't know. Maybe you can help me when you get an opportunity to speak, Mr Wettlaufer.

But they have decided, as a policy, that cities are important, that they are generators of a great deal of wealth, not just social but economic as well. So they said as a policy, nationally and as states, "We can make an important contribution towards the renewal of our economies."

They don't even talk about having a plan. Cities talk about, "We've got a plan." The Tories say, "We've got a plan." They talk about—I forget the word but it is a renewal plan. It is a regeneration kind of idea. The language is different. It goes beyond a plan; it's more visionary.

Part of that vision includes spending money on a few things—recreational facilities as well and cultural facilities, if you can image that. The other is on other important infrastructure such as the transportation infrastructure. The third component of that is housing. Can you believe that? It's housing.

They're spending money on the rehabilitation of buildings, meaning existing buildings that are there that they want to maintain, heritage buildings or otherwise, which they use money to renovate and keep, and also in the creation of housing. Does that sound like an American thing to do? I was beside myself when I read that and said, "That isn't possible, that the Americans could think in this way," and yet they are.

But it's something we did in the 1970s. Toronto did that in the 1970s and it lasted for 20 or 25 years or so, but we need now to move on, we need to regenerate. But cities can't regenerate on their own because they don't have the base. The property tax base, as you know, is very limited. Homeowners get very nasty when you increase their taxes on a regular basis. Cities and city politicians know that, so they've got to keep their taxes down.



Mel Lastman made a promise not to raise property taxes, and by God, that promise was a great promise because people like that. It doesn't matter about the negative consequences of keeping that promise, but the promise was important. We kept it.

Now the streets are not very clean. People are complaining. Now we've got roads that are dilapidated, where people I think are complaining that some of the roads are not cleaned and/or renovated and so on. But we kept the promise in that people don't like their property taxes increased.

You have managed to be able to download and devolve so many of the responsibilities down to them, just so many savings, you say, for municipalities. Even Mel Lastman said, "We've saved millions of dollars." How did we accomplish that? I think he said he saved \$70 million by firing 1,200 workers, I think last year and this year as well. He was proud of the fact that we're making savings. How do you make savings? You fire people or positions are no longer and you don't fill them again, which some people think that is a good thing.

Others say, "When the job is eliminated and it isn't filled again, it's an economic loss, it's a problem." It means that job doesn't exist any more. Someone is not earning a salary and someone is not paying taxes. So for some people it's a problem, but for others, for Mel, "We're making \$70 million in savings."

Anyway, it's a poor place to go, because property taxes cannot sustain the kind of renewal we're talking about. That's why the Americans have said, "We need to help cities," and they're pouring billions of dollars—not millions; billions of dollars—into it. I never expected the Americans to do that.

Minister, I am saying to you, you've got to look at that. You've got to look to see what the Americans are doing and help us all out and help the cities out. At the housing front, if you don't get back in some way, we will face a human disaster in housing. We're feeling it now. That quarter of the population that is paying over 50% of their income is in danger of losing their rental accommodation. That's what that report was saying. These people could become homeless.

We've got a problem in terms of housing; we've got a problem in terms of homelessness. The need is there and it's getting bigger.

We know that it takes anywhere from three to six years, or possibly longer, to build a non-profit complex or a co-operative complex. It takes three to six years. If we've got a need now that isn't being felt and you at some point decide we've got to do something and it takes three to six years, imagine how far away we're pushing the crises and the disaster.

I'm not sure you people are contemplating these problems but I really want to know, beyond the rhetorical elements of your speech and other ministers' when they speak about these problems, how you folks are going to address this identified need, that we will need 80,000 units by 2001 and we will have only 6,000 units being built.

**The Chair:** Now we'll turn to the government, the minister, for a half-hour response to the statements that we've heard.

**Hon Mr Clement:** With your indulgence, Chair, I have a cabinet committee responsibility that I have to participate in to meet some of the challenges that Rosario outlined. My parliamentary assistant is willing to stand in my place and I will be back tomorrow for the full duration of the committee.

**The Chair:** Certainly, Minister, we appreciate you have those other responsibilities. We may wish to rearrange some of the questioning; we'll see in your absence. Are you leaving at this time?

**Hon Mr Clement:** That's right, and I believe at that point the parliamentary assistant is going to make some comments and then will be available for any time that is remaining on your schedule today.

**The Chair:** All right. Could the parliamentary assistant come forward.

Before we start, it's normal practice for ministers to make themselves available or to advise the committee when they will not be available. We have not had that information in advance so I will rule that the official opposition, if it wishes, can defer 20 minutes of questioning for when the minister is available tomorrow if they so wish. Otherwise, the parliamentary assistant will be here and, as the minister has said, is ready to respond.

**Mr Curling:** Could I then respond to that because I think that we're on to some very pertinent topics and I know that the parliamentary assistant is quite a capable individual but I'm not quite sure if he would be able to respond to some of the questions that may be put to him. So maybe we should—

**The Chair:** I think we appreciate the fact the minister did attend today. Unfortunately, we did not have the notice ahead of time that he would only be able to make part of this session and that's why we will extend that option. You'll indicate at the time that your round comes, which is at the end of this, whether you would like to take that today or subsequently when the minister is available.

Now I would like to invite you to proceed with the 30-minute minister's response to what you've heard. Use that time as you see fit.

**Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester):** I appreciate this opportunity in this new environment to explain some of the initiatives and reply to some of queries by my colleagues.

One of the things that I think has happened—it started before 1995—is that it was very evident that with the change in our society and the changing demands and challenges that we're facing in all aspects of our society, if government didn't change to meet those challenges, we were headed for a disastrous future. This government, I believe to its credit, is taking some of those initiatives. Whenever you get into promoting change, you're subject to considerable criticism. That is understandable.

I think we all sit around this place, though, trying to make things better for the residents of Ontario and the

people that we represent in trying to address all of the problems.

In my former life as a mayor of a municipality and as a councillor, one of things that had been a constant for years and years, through AMO and through the municipalities to the government of the day, was the very fact that the provincial government had usurped too much power. We devolved some of that power back to the municipalities so that they could make decisions on issues that were close to them. They were closest to the people they represent.

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It was this government that listened to that request. As a result, a number of initiatives were undertaken over the last five years. I will attempt to go through them in the course of my 30 minutes. It started off with the restructuring of municipalities. The Who Does What panel tried to determine where a service was best delivered most effectively to the people who were affected by it. That resulted, of course, in Bill 26 and the initiation of a considerable amount of restructuring throughout the province.

As a result of that restructuring, there is evidence—lots of it—that restructuring does work, provided it's implemented properly. We have a number of success stories. We can even begin with Chatham-Kent, where there are annual savings of \$11.4 million expected at maturity. The amalgamated single tier in the county of Prince Edward expects savings of \$1.36 million. Even in something of the magnitude of the city of Toronto, there are projected savings of \$150 million—to date they have achieved \$120 million of those savings—on an annual basis. Sable and Spanish River, even these smaller situations, are projected to save \$149,000 per year. The city of Kenora has come into effect in January 1 with projected savings of \$800,000 per year. So it's not necessarily isolated to the higher-density areas in the province. There are savings to be achieved throughout the province in a variety of different ways.

Since 1996, our government has approved 118 locally driven and derived restructuring proposals. As a result, there are 229 fewer municipalities in Ontario, with 1,059 or 1,060 fewer politicians. That is a 23% reduction. Ontario taxpayers can expect to save in excess of \$200 million annually as a result of these restructuring efforts that have been carried out to date.

The most recent initiatives are of course in the four regions of Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury. Through that process, where we've had advisers appointed—they had 90 days to consult with the stakeholders, the public, businesses, service clubs and local councils and come forward with their recommendations to the minister. Those recommendations are to be forwarded to the minister's office on about November 26. The consultations were extensive, and these are four areas where they've had never-ending discussions. In Ottawa-Carleton, for example, this was going on for over 25 years. Everybody thought they were all working for Ford: They all had a better idea on how government should be restructured.

Finally it's going to be brought to closure, with a model and a plan to achieve those savings and provide a better model of governance that reduces the number of politicians, reduces taxes, so that the taxpayer, at the end of the day, gets a better bang for his buck. In Ottawa-Carleton, for example, over 1,000 submissions were presented to Mr Shortliffe—1,600 altogether in the four regions. So they've had ample opportunity to provide their input, and the advisers are presently writing their reports to be submitted to the minister.

To bring closure to this issue, our government would like to have this through the Legislature before Christmas so we can accommodate the restructured municipalities for November 2000, with the new elections, so they can put some initiatives into place that will save taxpayers money right from the get-go.

Other initiatives that we've taken to help municipalities deal better with their new responsibilities have a lot to do with the reduction in red tape and the approval process. Particularly in this ministry it has to do with planning issues.

From my own personal experience, planning issues and getting approvals is enough to drive a sane man nuts. It took something like three years to get plans of subdivision approved. It used to take 405 days to process an official plan amendment. That has been reduced, on average, to about 106 days. I still think we can do better. With the capable staff we have, that is something we're always striving for, to improve these timelines, which in turn affects development in our local municipalities. Our goal is to have a one-window approval process, where we can handle the majority of decisions in a very timely fashion.

This has a lot to do with the issue of rental units and new development. If we present and prepare the proper climate for investment, we believe that will invite the private sector to build the rental units.

In 1995 there was a situation where we as a government and our taxpayers simply could no longer afford the programs that we were involved in with respect to rental housing. In June 1998, our government proclaimed the Tenant Protection Act which reformed the Ontario system of rent regulation.

The previous system, in a lot of people's minds, including this government's, didn't work. There were not rental units being built. We had to change the environment, the investment climate, so people would invest and build rental units. Tenants were not having their accommodations fixed. There were leaking faucets, leaking roofs, doors that wouldn't close, elevators that wouldn't work, that kind of thing, and they weren't being repaired, because there wasn't that spread in the investment, return on investment, to enable them to that. So there were games being played, as we all know, between the landlord and tenant in terms of providing affordable and reliable accommodations. As a result, our housing stock increasingly became run-down. There was no encouragement for landlords to improve maintenance or build new buildings.



Our goal was to deliver a balanced system that would work for landlords, tenants and taxpayers and would encourage the builders to get back into the business of constructing new rental housing. We're pleased. The results that we've had so far are encouraging. They're not monumental, but it is a start. As I mentioned earlier, when we change a system it does take some persistence and some initiative to make the plan work. But it is encouraging with some of the initial results received.

Landlords are spending more to maintain their rental stock. Ontario now ranks second among regions in Canada for money spent on renovations. If you talk to some of the construction people or the renovators in your own communities, they are busy; they are busier than any other form of tradesperson in our communities.

We've also introduced the tribunal, which is very effective in terms of resolving disputes between landlords and tenants and providing information about the Tenant Protection Act. The tribunal was set up to ensure a fairer, more efficient process of hearings between landlord and tenant disputes, moving them from a court system into a less formal system of mediation and adjudication. In the past, it would take months to get a court date; now applicants are generally having their cases heard within weeks, in many cases within three weeks.

Members of the tribunal are getting their decisions out to parties within two or three days. In its first year of operation, the tribunal successfully mediated more than 5,000 applications, at a minimum cost to the taxpayers of Ontario. The admin costs for the rent regulation system are 4.3% lower than they were three years ago under the previous system.

Under the Tenant Protection Act, tenants continue to be protected from unjust evictions. On a year-over-year basis, the overall number of applications to terminated tenancy has remained constant. During the last year of the old Provincial Court system, 60,200 were received, and in the first year the Tenant Protection Act the tribunal received 60,550 applications.

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Stats from the Superior Court of Justice show a slight decline in the number of writs of possession filed in the city of Toronto. For the period between January and June 1998, when the Provincial Court system was still in place, there were 4,077 writs filed. During that same period in 1999, under the Tenant Protection Act, only 4,054 writs were filed.

The Tenant Protection Act has rules about demolition, conversion of condominiums and renovation of rental units, including requirements for compensating tenants and providing alternative accommodations. The Tenant Protection Act changes the focus of the previous legislation. Old legislation focused on protecting units. The Tenant Protection Act shifts the focus to protecting tenants, while at the same time promoting a better climate for the building of much-needed new rental stock.

Landlords are still required to provide tenants with security of tenure or compensation. In the case of demolitions, landlords must provide tenants with at least 120

days' notice of termination before the end of the term of tenancy and landlords are required to pay the tenant the equivalent of the three months' rent or offer the tenant another acceptable rental unit. In the case of conversions to condominiums, the Tenant Protection Act provides tenants with a lifetime security of tenure and right of first refusal to purchase their units after conversion. Tenants continue to be protected—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr Coburn. I'd just remind committee members that we did have good attentiveness during the other—

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, but it's so tiring—

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Chairman, did I come in during the reading of the book of myths? I'm not quite sure.

**The Chair:** Mr Bradley, your attendance and intervention are noted, but out of order. I would direct, and ask the committee members' co-operation, to Mr Coburn's remarks and look forward to the rest of his presentation. Mr Coburn, please.

**Mr Coburn:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. I can have this bound and you can keep a copy by your bed, if you'd like.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, please. I want a copy now.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm going to wait for the movie.

**Mr Coburn:** Tenants continue to be protected by rent control and can be evicted for reasons set out in the Tenant Protection Act. While the Tenant Protection Act removes the impediments to condominium conversion, demolition or renovation of rental buildings, municipalities may adopt or continue to have policies and they have those tools at their disposal to control demolitions.

The approval of demolitions and conversions and major renovations of rental stock continues to remain a municipal responsibility through provisions in the Planning Act and the building code. Municipalities have authority through their official plan policies to restrict the conversion of rental stock to condominiums. Many municipal official plans contain policies that regulate conversion of rental housing stock. For example, municipalities may establish a minimum vacancy rate threshold that must be met before they will consider a conversion application.

Addressing rent control is a fundamental part of encouraging new apartment construction, not only a necessary action. We streamlined the entire land use planning system in the province and passed a new Planning Act. We've cut back on development charges that municipalities can load on to new housing and we passed a new Development Charges Act. We have reviewed the building code. We passed a new updated building code for Ontario which came into effect in 1998. We've improved the property tax situation for the construction of new rental housing, and we've announced a provincial sales tax grant program to encourage construction of affordable rental housing across the province.

We also continue to press the federal government to change its policies with regard to the high GST on the

construction of new apartments and to reduce the unfairly high mortgage insurance premiums for the construction of rental housing. This year there were 474 private rental starts in communities with low vacancy rates, such as Toronto and Windsor, and almost double the target of 247 units.

But it takes time to turn the system around, as I had indicated previously. It had so many disincentives built in that many developers gave up on Ontario altogether. We are on the right track and we are confident that investors and builders will return to this province to fulfill our plan.

Ontario taxpayers currently spend \$1.5 billion every year to subsidize social housing. In the last year, we've achieved significant savings in the area of social housing. We're averaging less than 6% on mortgage renewals. Savings have been found through operational and cost efficiencies, and these of course will be passed on to municipalities. Our government has always believed that social housing is a service that can best be provided at the local level. Municipalities, as we all know, have a long history of involvement in social housing and they know the needs of their community better than anyone.

On January 1, 1998, we transferred the funding responsibility for social housing to municipalities as part of the local services realignment. As part of that exchange in responsibilities under the local services realignment, the province cut in half the education portion of the residential education property tax and provided more than \$1 billion in funding to municipalities to help them assume their new responsibilities.

With the new division of responsibilities, local governments now pay the cost of Ontario's 231,000 units of social housing, and the costs have fallen by 15% compared to three years ago. Maintaining a unit of public housing is now less than \$233 per month, our original target. The cost per unit in non-profit and co-op housing built after 1985 is now down to \$655 per month.

In order to fully devolve the administration of social housing to municipalities, we need to reach a federal-provincial agreement, which the minister spoke about earlier on this afternoon, as we expect that agreement to be finalized in the very near future. The federal-provincial agreement will let local government simplify social housing programs, streamline administrative arrangements and serve plans more effectively. It would also allow Ontario to fulfill its commitment to create a new \$50-million rent supplement program, which will provide accommodation for some 10,000 low-income families and individuals.

These are some of the initiatives we have taken to improve the housing situation in Ontario. The challenges are indeed great, for us as a government, and for all members in the opposition and the third party, to work together to try and solve the many challenges that we face. We believe that by taking some of the initiatives we have in other areas to improve the investment climate in this province, it will prove to be a place where individuals would want to reinvest again, like they did in the

1970s and early 1980s in this province, and return the province to prosperity.

I think there is proof in the pudding. If the economy of Ontario is to function in an efficient manner and on all cylinders, we have to make changes in every aspect of our society. There are results coming in that show we are on the right track: the very fact that the economy has improved and that we have helped create over 500,000 jobs in a short of period of time, that the economy has turned around and we are leading the G7. Yes, you can say part of that credit goes to the strong economy in the States, but I think some of the credit is deserved here at home for some of the initiatives that we have taken within this province. Ontario is looked upon as, and is and is expected to be, the economic engine of this country. The leadership role that we have to play is of paramount importance.

Those challenges that are in front of us we take as serious, or more serious than the next person: the very fact that there is not enough housing, the very fact of where a person is to get their next meal in some instances. Those are very serious issues that we do have a tremendous amount of concern about. What is the right combination? If it was easy, we would all have the answer. It is a constant, day-in, day-out challenge to be able to meet the changes in our society and to be able to help those who are less fortunate.

Our government is open to suggestions, but not the old ones that haven't worked. There is plenty of evidence that we've flogged some of these horses and they haven't taken us anywhere except into further trouble. With the growing population that we have, and the prosperity, I think it does bode well that there are solutions out there where we can help those who need affordable housing and adequate housing so they can look to a future where they can achieve some of the dreams that we're in a position to take advantage of on a daily basis.

I believe that some of the initiatives we've taken haven't borne full fruit yet, but it's early in our mandate. There are signs that we are on the right track and that it will pay dividends to us in the future.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Coburn. You still have approximately 10 minutes left in the allotted time. Did you wish to entertain questions, or how did you wish to use that time?

**Mr Marchese:** I think we should go.

**Mr Coburn:** Do you want to go?

**Mr Marchese:** Yes.

**Mr Coburn:** You'd rather get at the big guy.

**The Chair:** Mr Coburn, what is your disposition?

**Mr Coburn:** We're finished for this evening.

**The Chair:** You're finished with your presentation. We have an indication from the official opposition that they would prefer to question the minister, and for the circumstances described previously, we'll permit that to happen.

We'll start again at 3:30 tomorrow. Thank you very much.

*The committee adjourned at 1740.*



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## **Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

**Wednesday 17 November 1999**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

**Mercredi 17 novembre 1999**

## **Standing committee on estimates**

**Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing**

## **Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

**Ministère des Affaires municipales  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 17 November 1999

Mercredi 17 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1545 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL  
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** I call the meeting to order. When last we were here, I presume that you had finished the response, and the rotation will start with the opposition.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Before we begin, Mr Chair, I have a matter of business for the committee. I just want to advise the committee. I understand the House leaders have been in discussion to extend this committee for an additional two weeks; in fact, there may be a motion coming to the House tomorrow or at some later time.

The education estimates for 1999-2000 cover both education and colleges, universities and training. For the benefit of the ministers, for the benefit of the staff, the Liberal committee members propose that the 10 hours of education question-and-answer debate be allocated as follows:

On day one, two hours of presentations—the ministers can decide among themselves how they wish to deal with that—and half an hour of questions for the education ministry; on day two, two and a half hours of questions for the education ministry; on day three, two and a half hours for the education ministry; and on day four, two and a half hours for the colleges, universities and training ministry.

I trust this will make it easier for the ministers and for the staff members involved to allocate their time.

**The Vice-Chair:** You mentioned this is 1999-2000; it's 1999 estimates.

**Mr Caplan:** We're dealing with the 1999-2000 estimates, are we?

**Clerk of the Committee (Ms Anne Stokes):** Yes, it's the fiscal year 1999-2000.

**Mr Caplan:** Yes, it was a typo.

**Clerk of the Committee:** That's a typo.

**The Vice-Chair:** I'm just saying that your written stuff to me will say 1998-1999, so it's 1999-2000.

**Mr Caplan:** I didn't prepare it.

**The Vice-Chair:** The presentation of the estimates for education, colleges, universities and training, there are two ministries, and within that there's a half-hour presentation. The ministers at that time will decide whether

they want 15 minutes and 15 minutes for their presentations, not half an hour and half an hour.

**Mr Caplan:** No, no. According to the terms of this committee, there's a half-hour presentation—

**The Vice-Chair:** That's my understanding from the clerk here.

**Mr Caplan:** A half-hour presentation from—

**The Vice-Chair:** They can make the presentation in their 15 minutes and 15 minutes.

**Mr Caplan:** Or whatever. They may want to do 30-nothing or 10-20. That's certainly up to the ministers to decide. Then it will proceed in the normal rotation.

**The Vice-Chair:** That might be so, but I'm trying to say to you that it's not an hour, it's half an hour, and the minister will decide if it's 15-15 or whatever.

**Mr Caplan:** Yes, that's the way this committee is. That's the rotation of the committee.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Chair, I wonder if Mr Caplan could give that list again?

**Mr Caplan:** On the first day, two hours of presentations, which would be half an hour for the ministers, a half-hour response for the Liberal caucus, a half-hour response for the NDP caucus and a half-hour final response by the ministers—that would leave half an hour, and questions to be directed to the education ministry; on day two, two and a half hours of questions for the education ministry; on day three, two and a half hours of questions for the education ministry; and on day four, two and a half hours of questions for the colleges, universities and training ministry.

**The Vice-Chair:** Is that OK?

**Mr Caplan:** Just for the benefit of the ministers and their staff.

**The Vice-Chair:** So noted.

I understand, Mr Caplan, you'll start off making a comment or something like that, or is it Mr Colle?

**Mr Caplan:** I believe we're going into questions, and my colleague Mr Colle will be the leading off.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's 20 minutes, the rotation. I just remind you.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Thank you for being here again, Minister and staff.

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** My pleasure.



**Mr Colle:** Yesterday, I asked for a list of the municipalities in Ontario that had not issued their 1998 property tax bills. I wonder if I could have that list?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think what we were able to circulate was a percentage list based upon our understanding. Again, I don't believe we're the lead on this, but Janet Mason, our assistant deputy minister, did correspond with the clerk of this committee and indicated that 80% of the municipalities had issued adjustments to 1998 taxes and 45% of them had done so for 1999 final tax bills as of last Friday. That's our current understanding. In terms of the actual physical list, perhaps my deputy could speak to that.

**Mr Michael Fenn:** It's based on a survey that the Ministry of Finance and the Ontario Property Assessment Corp has done of municipalities. Anecdotally, we have provided the software, the CD, on which the billing is to be based to virtually all municipalities. Over half of them have actually billed. They're in a transition stage now. Among 500 municipalities that actually do billing, it would be difficult to actually prepare a list without going out and phoning them all and finding exactly where they stand, but our survey suggests that the lion's share of them are now in a position—

**Mr Colle:** But this is for 1998.

**Mr Fenn:** As the minister indicated, 80% of them have in fact billed for 1998.

**Mr Colle:** You don't have a list of the ones that have not issued a 1998 tax bill? I would think the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would have a pretty good line on whether they've issued tax bills, and could see whether the new collection system that you're helping fund is working or not, and the new software is working. You don't know the municipalities that have not issued a tax bill—not 1999 even—1998?

**Mr Fenn:** The question that was posed to us yesterday was the number of municipalities, and that was the number we gave you. In terms of an individual list, what we're talking about here is adjustments to 1998. We're not talking about people who have never sent a 1998 tax bill; we're talking about the adjustments to 1998.

**Mr Colle:** So they haven't sent their final 1998 bill, adjustments included?

**Mr Fenn:** That's correct. The adjustments of the 1998 final bill.

**Mr Colle:** So you don't have a list of those municipalities that have not—

**Mr Fenn:** We can certainly provide one, since it's now been requested.

**Mr Colle:** That's what I asked for yesterday.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Mike, sorry. We thought you wanted the general figures, so—

**Mr Colle:** No. I asked for the number of municipalities, the list of municipalities. Anyway, if I could have that, I'd appreciate it.

Getting back to the Ontario property tax analysis system, what is the total cost of establishing that system, for the government? Putting in the software, the main-

tenance, the operation, the staff time—what does it cost the Ontario taxpayer to put in the OPTA system?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Just to make sure that we are as precise as possible, I'd like to ask Nancy Bardecki to come up front. She's our director of municipal finance. Maybe she has the best information for you, Mike.

**Ms Nancy Bardecki:** I'm Nancy Bardecki, director of municipal finance in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Sorry, I was on my way out to secure the list that you were asking for and I didn't hear your question.

**Mr Colle:** The question is, the system that you put in, the Ontario property tax analysis system, for municipalities so they can essentially computerize their tax assessment-tax collection systems, what has been the cost to the Ontario government of implementing this system and maintaining it and updating it, so far?

**Ms Bardecki:** If we're talking about the OPTA system—that is, the computer programming and the system that does the calculations—I think the deputy mentioned yesterday that it's about \$1.4 million. There are additional costs associated with the centralized management of the frozen assessment listing.

**Mr Colle:** Yes, and that's what I'm looking for, again, very clearly: all the costs associated with OPTA, whether they be in software development, data input, data revisions, data processing, the consulting fees.

**Ms Bardecki:** The costs are not yet complete because the frozen assessment listing maintenance is an ongoing cost. What we can provide for you is an approximation of what has been spent to date. As I say, there are a number of different components. There is the OPTA model itself, on-line property tax analysis model. It's a computer program that initially did analysis of alternative options that municipalities could choose to phase in property tax changes and mitigate tax shifts. That model was revised.

**Mr Colle:** It's still under revision, is it not, as we speak?

**Ms Bardecki:** The model was revised to allow municipalities to calculate the tax adjustments that were necessary to meet the terms of the 10-5-5 capping that was required by the Fairness for Property Taxpayers Act.

**Mr Colle:** Because of the minister's announcement of yesterday, I guess there will have to be further revisions, will there not?

**Ms Bardecki:** I'm sorry?

**Mr Colle:** The minister's announcement in the budget bill about the fact that properties constructed after 1998 will also be—

**Ms Bardecki:** There will be modifications.

**Mr Colle:** What are the costs, approximately, of OPTA? This \$1.2 million is nowhere near what the total cost is. What is it, \$50 million, \$100 million? What are we talking?

**Ms Bardecki:** Oh, my goodness, no. As the deputy said yesterday, the cost of the programming for OPTA itself, that is the model that does the calculations—

**Mr Colle:** And all the related costs, the consultants who have done it, the software.

**Ms Bardecki:** I thought you would like to know the different components.

**Mr Colle:** I want to know the cost of all the components.

**Ms Bardecki:** This is what I was trying to say. The programming component that I just described is, as the deputy said yesterday, about \$1.4 million. In addition to that, there have been costs associated with the centralized management of the frozen assessment listing. The responsibility for the frozen assessment listing actually lies with municipalities according to the law, but on March 23 Minister Eves announced that the province would assist municipalities by centrally managing the frozen assessment listing. It's quite a complex job, a very complex job.

**Mr Colle:** Sorry to interrupt, but I only have a limited amount of time. Cost: How much has been spent by the government on this system and related costs?

**Ms Bardecki:** The \$1.4 million was for the programming, and then I would suggest that so far another approximately \$2.4 million has been spent for the centralized management of the frozen assessment listing. As I also indicated, that's an ongoing process. We have made almost a million changes to 220,000 properties so far, and this will continue throughout the period during which the frozen assessment listing is needed. So those costs will continue.

**Mr Colle:** So this includes consulting fees and staff time for getting the system up and running and operational.

**Ms Bardecki:** That doesn't include ministry staff time. Ministry staff spent a great deal of time testing the model for its accuracy.

**Mr Colle:** Okay. What about consulting fees?

**Ms Bardecki:** I was including the consulting fees in that. We do have a consultant doing the computer programming and the frozen assessment listing.

**Mr Colle:** So that's part of the \$2.4 million? So you think that OPTA so far has cost the provincial government about \$3.8 million, in that range.

**Ms Bardecki:** The cost that we've actually paid out of our pocket, so to speak, yes. But as I say, there has been a lot of staff time put in on this, first in testing the model and second with a help line assisting municipalities to run the model. Those are costs.

**Mr Colle:** OK. I'm just worried about hiring outside people and those related costs more than actual staff time.

**Hon Mr Clement:** She indicated that that was included in that figure she gave you.

**Mr Colle:** So basically, under \$4 million for OPTA.

**Ms Bardecki:** So far, but there are ongoing costs.

**Mr Colle:** That's fine, then. Has the ministry calculated the cost of implementing Bill 79 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs? I know the bill originated in part from the Ministry of Finance, but it's your carriage also. Has there been a ballpark figure for the cost of implementing Bill 79?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I just want to make sure we understand your question very specifically. Are you talking about the operating costs or the flow-through costs? What costs are you referring to, Mike?

**Mr Colle:** The costs incurred by your ministry in terms of ensuring that that bill is brought into fruition as law and that it's basically a workable bill. Certainly you have a business plan for everything you do in the ministry. You must have a business plan for Bill 79. What I'm really asking for is, the bill has been given to you and you're implementing it. What has the cost been of implementing Bill 79?

**1600**

**Ms Bardecki:** I'm sorry, we haven't actually tallied up every hour of staff time that has been spent on Bill 79.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Just to be fair to the ministry, based on my experience, which admittedly is only for the past four years, it would be rather unorthodox for a ministry to divide its direct operating expenditures according to pieces of legislation. Typically what they do is they have staff time; sometimes a staff person is working on something related to one piece of legislation or maybe a whole series of pieces of legislation. That question is a legitimate question, but it's not something that would automatically be in the estimates.

**Mr Colle:** So basically you haven't got a costing of the implementation of a bill like Bill 79.

**Hon Mr Clement:** To be fair, we have not done it that way.

**Mr Colle:** If you don't do it, you don't do it.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think Nancy wants to say something.

**Ms Bardecki:** I was wondering if you would be interested in the financial assistance that we provided to municipalities for their costs of implementing Bill 79.

**Mr Colle:** Sure, that would help.

**Ms Bardecki:** To assist municipalities with the cost of having to do additional billing in respect of 1998 to make those tax adjustments, we provided to municipalities a \$200 flat amount plus \$40 per tax account as per the roll as returned June 15, 1998, in the capped classes; that is, commercial, industrial and multiple-unit residential properties. That was something that we provided to help municipalities with their costs. There was also interest assistance provided to municipalities to assist them with the interest income forgone or the interest costs they had to incur if they had to borrow because their tax bills were later than they would normally be as the result of having to make these changes, including the 1998 adjustments in their 1999 interim bills.

**Mr Colle:** In terms of the municipalities themselves, when can we expect a new municipal act to be tabled? I know discussions have been going on for the last couple of years, but they seem to be coming to a head. Is there a timeframe that you can talk about, Minister?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, I'll give you an update. We have asked Brian Coburn, who's the parliamentary assistant in the ministry, to do a final round of consideration and consultation on these issues. He is then to report back



to the minister and the ministry. In terms of the timelines, I think we're looking at something next year. I don't think it will be in this session. I think that would be hoping for a bit too much in terms of making sure we have all the adequate input, and there might be a few more wrinkles this year than last year that we would want to incorporate.

**Mr Colle:** I thought you might have been more into that.

The other thing is, in terms of the restructuring, the ministry has gone through the four in Haldimand, Norfolk, Ottawa and Sudbury. I was looking for it in your estimates here. What has been the cost to the ministry in undertaking those restructurings? You've had to pay the facilitators and support staff. What has the cost of that been? Is it anywhere in the estimates?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I don't believe it would be in the estimates, to be honest with you, Mike, but I think our projections are that it would be under \$1 million for all four special advisers.

**Mr Colle:** That's for basically the restructuring, the lead people.

**Hon Mr Clement:** And all of the costs of travel—

**Mr Colle:** Yes, supports.

**Hon Mr Clement:**—setting up the town halls, that kind of thing.

**Mr Colle:** There was a report in the Toronto Star today that said that the former Minister of Municipal Affairs had suggested, according to the report, that Mr Proszanski be brought in as a facilitator for the Windsor amalgamation discussions. My question is, would you look through your records to see if Mr Proszanski has been retained by the ministry up until this date in any way, shape or form; and if you know already, has he? If he hasn't, he hasn't. If you haven't checked that, could you please check to see whether he has been retained.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think it's incumbent upon me to suggest at this time that those issues are before the OPP and so I'm a bit reluctant to comment until the police investigation is complete. But certainly if there was any request by law enforcement officials, we've complied with every request.

**Mr Colle:** If the OPP were to question ministry officials, they would certainly obviously come forward with that information on whether Mr Proszanski has been retained. But in the Windsor situation, is there a facilitator for Windsor right now or someone trying to mediate?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No, there is not at this time.

**Mr Colle:** I think there was a report I saw that said you were going to make the Ottawa facilitator's report public.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think all the reports will be public.

**Mr Colle:** They will all be tabled after they've gone to the minister. Then they will all be made public, after they're in your hands.

**Hon Mr Clement:** That's correct. What we're trying to signal is that the end date for receiving the reports

from the special advisers is Friday, November 26, and I think we've indicated pretty clearly that the reports will be public on Friday, November 26.

**Mr Colle:** OK. That's a good idea.

I have another question. In terms of the city of Toronto, I know you referred yesterday to their ability to save as a result of restructuring. What you also have in the estimates is that you've made two \$100-million loans to the city, if I'm not mistaken. Have you made any loans to other municipalities that are undergoing restructuring?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Those were very specific and dedicated loans because of the complexity of the situation in the city of Toronto. We also had other programs that were designed to assist municipalities in their restructuring efforts. Perhaps the deputy can go into some detail.

**Mr Fenn:** There's a municipal restructuring fund that assists municipalities and counties and in northern Ontario to undertake municipal restructuring. There's the northern transitional assistance that dealt with annexation of unincorporated territory. There was a one-time grant to the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth to deal with consolidating their administration with the city of Hamilton, and there are some other examples of that.

**Mr Colle:** Could I have—

**The Vice-Chair:** This will be your last question.

**Mr Colle:** Yes, the last question—a breakdown of what the other loans or grants have been? I know the Toronto ones stick out because they're quite large, but is it possible to get a list from the ministry of all the financial help that the ministry has given to municipalities undergoing restructuring, either in loan or grant? I know there was also a change in Toronto in terms of ambulance services. You gave Toronto, I think, an extra \$80 million on top of the \$200 million for ambulance service payments. I just want to get a handle on it in terms of the costs of the restructuring across the province, so if I could get that kind of information.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think we can certainly undertake to give you that specifically. I'm just looking over at Crom here. Is there a page in the estimates that would be helpful in that regard?

**The Vice-Chair:** I would ask you to take this under consideration and maybe submit the answer in the next round.

Mr Marchese, you have 20 minutes.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Mr Chair, I just wondered whether my other colleagues directly across from me have any other questions or comments. I really want to hear from them. Have they had an opportunity?

**The Vice-Chair:** Are you giving up your time now?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Are you going to give all of your time to us?

**Mr Marchese:** No, I want to share my time. Of my half-hour, I would like to give you 15 minutes.

**The Vice-Chair:** You don't want to give it up. Mr Marchese, are you saying you'll give up your time if they will take it?

**Mr Marchese:** I'll give them 10 minutes of my time because I want to hear from them.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are there any comments or questions from the Conservatives?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** He wants to do 10 minutes.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Yes or no?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We'll take 10 of his minutes.

**The Vice-Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you very much. I appreciate this. First of all, I do want to compliment you, Chair, on being able to take over on such short notice.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mere brilliance.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** The permanent Chair just couldn't make it again today, as has been the case for the last two years. He misses 50% of the time, and I think it's indicative of the disdain that he holds for this committee that he doesn't show up. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it is.

**Mr Marchese:** Come on.

**Mr Caplan:** That's really inappropriate.

1610

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Mr Chair, I do want to make a comment here. We have heard for the last two days how the Tenant Protection Act was going to cause so many problems. We heard it for two years when we were running around the province hearing the submissions to the Tenant Protection Act before we actually introduced it to the House. What I want to point out—I want this on the record—is that I did a survey in my riding, which is a residential, urban riding—50% of my riding is multi-residential—and we published the results of this survey. Only 70% of the tenants in my riding received a rent increase, so 30% received no rent increase after the TPA. Of the 70% that received a rent increase, 54% received a rent increase of less than 3%, between 1% and 3%. A further 11% received an increase of only 4% to 7%, and that included all of the allowance for maintenance of buildings, which we have heard over the last couple of days was badly needed.

I want to point out for the interest of the members of the opposition that since the Tenant Protection Act has been introduced there has been an average rent increase of 2.8% in the province. Under your governments, when you had full rent control, we had an average rent increase of 4.6% and quite often it was as high as 6%. So let's not hear any more nonsense.

Also, when we talked to the tenants in my riding, they were unaware that the city of Kitchener, as do all municipalities, set the property tax rate. They were unaware that tenants paid 3.2 times what a residential rate was—3.2 times. That's the fault of the municipal governments. Now, our government has given tax relief to the municipalities. We have taken back the education tax. In spite of that, the tenants are getting stuck.

That's all I have to say on this. I know my colleague Mr Mazzilli would like to ask the minister a question. I'd like to pass it on to him.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** I too will be focusing on the Tenant Protection Act. Unlike my colleague Wayne, I did not do a survey, but I spent many years driving in our neighbourhoods and in our communities.

One thing, Minister: There's been a recognition by all three parties over the years that some sort of rent control needs to be in place. That started back with our government a number of years ago. Those controls are to protect tenants from unreasonable increases but allow the free market to allow more construction so that there's a sufficient supply out there and people will make the investments required.

As I followed the number of governments in place, at the time when the Liberals came to power an enormous bureaucratic system under the old Landlord and Tenant Act had been put in place, although probably well-intentioned, where a landlord did some renovations and then had to apply to a board to get some sort of increases. That made the landlord spend money on enormous legal fees, money that could have gone into the repair of the building. Instead, it was spent on legal fees and process, and in many cases enormous rent increases were granted, thereby not helping the tenant at the end of the process.

Through the evolving of time with the NDP, of course, that was stopped, that ability to apply for rent increases based on capital improvements, if you will. What that did, certainly in the London community, was that not only did the economy run itself into the ground where landlords were unable to easily evict people for nonpayment of rent, but many landlords walked away from their buildings. Certainly what I saw were buildings with no owners. The banks refused to repossess them; the landlord had simply walked away. Maybe two or three tenants left, the vast majority of them moving out even while not paying any rent, because the buildings had become unsafe. Although they were well-intentioned in trying to protect tenants, it simply did not work.

My question to you, Minister: Under the Tenant Protection Act what I've seen, certainly in London, is not only the older buildings with capital improvements but newer buildings being built. In your professional opinion, sir, is the Tenant Protection Act working for both tenants and landlords?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you for the question, Frank. I would say it is. I think we have made some very definable and measurable progress. Ultimately the Tenant Protection Act is about protecting tenants' right but also balancing the needs of the tenants with the landlords, because if the system doesn't work, it's almost a pyrrhic victory where we think we're doing the right thing and yet the unintended, perhaps, consequence of attempting to do the right thing is that there is no marketplace that is functioning and therefore no new units available on stream. That ultimately is self-defeating. That's the pyrrhic victory part of my commentary.

Under this act, the TPA, this year the permissible rent increase was 2.6% for next year, and that's the lowest it's been in 25 years.



**The Vice-Chair:** The generous offer of the NDP is up. You've got 10 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to hear from those folks because they don't get much of an opportunity to speak. It's terrible for them to sit there and just have to listen. I hope you find that my contribution was generous, right?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We appreciate it.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, yesterday I raised some concerns and I wonder whether you've had some time to reflect, and just to add a few quick things so that you have time to respond.

First of all with respect to maintenance, which you commented on yesterday and both of the members commented on today, the fact of the matter is that a lot of the landlords weren't spending the guideline increases to do maintenance. Guideline increases you don't have to account for; you just get the money. My view is, a lot of these people who own these buildings did not spend that money to maintain their buildings. In fact, many of them used it to buy other buildings or to make other investments of a different kind. That's my argument to you.

We also know from a little study that we have seen—I forget whether it was Barnicke or some other individual who in some limited way did a survey and found that people were getting a 10% rate of return, meaning that even in our bad times they were doing well. Maybe not every landlord was doing well but a lot of them were doing well, even during a recession.

So with respect to maintenance, if you allow your buildings to deteriorate because you're not spending the within-guideline increases, you arrive at a point when you people get into power and say, "We have to change the rules; the buildings are falling apart." Of course they're falling apart; they're not putting any money into them, the money they should have been spending on those buildings. I wanted to raise that point.

I speak to your point that you just alluded to again today, saying the private sector needs to build, we need to change it so the private sector builds and so on, let the marketplace take care of things. You will recall two things I said with respect to the marketplace: that when you have a high vacancy rate, you expect rates to go down. I pointed out, and you must have had the study because there are so many civil servants to help you out with this—

**Hon Mr Clement:** Sometimes even that's not enough.  
1620

**Mr Marchese:** If they're not enough, good God. We have so many soldiers here.

They indicate that even when the vacancy rates are high, rents have still gone up in a lot of parts of Ontario. So the traditional market philosophy doesn't work. That's one.

In relation to the market working or the private sector building, they're not building. Your typical answer has been—yours and the previous minister's and others—that the system needs time. I know what the system

needs. The private sector needs a whole lot of support or money or grants or free land and a whole lot of other kinds of support from you guys to be able to build.

So we're reaching a crisis point. When that crisis point finally hits all of us, including you, you will then have to come and impose yourselves as a government by saying, "We're going to have to intervene here." You folks usually say you want government off our backs, right? The crisis is going to become such that at some point you're going to have to help the private sector, and then you're going to have to do what we did in the 1970s and 1960s, where we literally have to give you free land or grant systems to permit you to build or a mortgage scheme that makes it beneficial. You're going to have to do that at some point, and I wager that you will do that. I know that you will do that, if you're still in government, and I have a sense the crisis is reaching the proportion where you may have to do it within this current term of yours.

So nobody is building. You quite frankly say you're out of the business. The feds have gotten out of the business, but they might come back in. Who knows? We have a crisis that's really big. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp has told us we need 80,000 units—it's not me; it's them saying it—and we're not anywhere near meeting that need by 2001. We will only build 6,000 units, I was saying yesterday.

So what do you think? Do we have a housing problem? Do you think there's a housing disaster out there? What do you think about what these people have told us in *Where's Home*, Part II, which says people are paying more on rent than they can afford, that over 300,000 people are paying over 50% of their income on rent? How are you addressing that issue? How do you feel personally about it? How do you think we should be addressing that particular issue?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I thank my friend for his very thoughtful comments. I think it's important to make it very clear—I hope I was clear yesterday; I will be clear again today—that we, on our side of the House, believe that the old system, which included a top-down, not-balanced approach on so-called tenant protection, although it was self-defeating, and certainly the approach of the government of Ontario being integrally involved in the bricks and mortar of low-income housing, did not work. It did not work.

It was perhaps the law of unintended consequences, perhaps it was the fact that it was such a top-down approach, that a lot of perverse incentives were built into the system, but the fact of the matter is it didn't work for Ontarians. It didn't work for Ontarians who were tenants, it didn't work for Ontarians who were new to this country and needed a decent place to live. It didn't work for anybody, except perhaps the high-priced consultants and the high-priced lawyers and the high-priced architects.

From our perspective, we did make a sea change and said that we are not interested in something that does not work, we are not interested in being involved as

government in bricks and mortar, because government is not very good at these things.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, it's bad. OK. Move on. All right.

**Hon Mr Clement:** So we decided to move on.

You raised a couple of points, and I do want to turn to them a little bit. First of all, we do have in the Tenant Protection Act provisions about landlords who fail to maintain their buildings.

**Mr Marchese:** We did too.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Sure you did. I can say quite honestly we made it tougher. There's always going to be a sliver of the population that is not playing by the rules. I deal with it in my other portfolio when it comes to polluters, for instance. There are some landlords that try to take advantage of the system; there are some tenants who try to take advantage of the system. Even though, by and large, the great majority of tenants are good, there are some rogues. Even though, by and large, the great majority of landlords are good, there are some that are trying to milk the system.

So if you have any evidence, despite our best intentions, of someone who is trying to get around the system that we have put in place in good faith in the Tenant Protection Act, please let us know.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I don't mean to interrupt you. I'm very singular in my approach. Housing is my most critical interest. The housing crisis, the fact that nobody is building, that's of critical interest to me. All the other stuff I'm interested in too, but we don't really have much time. I just want to know how you're going to address that.

**Hon Mr Clement:** That's fine. We as a society do have some challenges in this area, there's no question about it. But I think we are making progress.

The problem with the statistics is that they are very directed at a certain type of rental accommodation. I don't want to get into the lies, damn lies and statistics metaphor, but there are some problems with that because they don't count everything. For instance, we have had great increases in home construction and home ownership, which in turn allows new units to be made available. We have a number of condominiums that are being built, and our information indicates that up to 25% of those condominiums are used for rental accommodation because they are sublet. So that, combined with 40,000 housing starts, does have an impact.

There is more to do, and in fact we do call upon our federal counterparts. There was a lot that was identified in the Lampert report that David mentioned yesterday, talking about cutting the GST costs for new-unit construction, talking about reducing the CMHC insurance premiums. Those will help us create a functioning market, which we have not had in the past.

We're making some steps here. Perhaps you'd be interested to know that since our discussion yesterday, the Canadian government did sign the social housing agreement today. So that's good news. That means that 10,000 new families, more families, will have access to rental supplements as a result of our commitment; \$50

million was the commitment because of this Canada-Ontario social housing agreement. So we are making progress.

It does get frustrating, Rosario. I share your frustration. We all want the progress to happen tomorrow. If I had a magic wand, believe me, this is one of the areas where I'd use the magic wand. But we live in the world of reality and the here and now. I take some comfort from the fact that the TPA and other measures that we are pursuing are making definable, discernible progress on the issues that you and I care so much about.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, it's not discernible at all in terms of the progress. We are not seeing it. If the deputy assisted you in telling you that we're doing great in the housing market, that is true in terms of those individuals who can buy houses. They're doing OK. Their incomes are five or six times higher—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** You're kidding? Did we run out of time?

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes. You were just on a roll, but you gave up your 10 minutes. May I ask the government, are you sharing your time too?

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** It's doubtful; I'll share it with my colleagues.

Minister, I want to address a question to social housing as well. I also just want to make a comment that I had the privilege, I guess, to sit on the hearings for the Tenant Protection Act, and I don't think there's any doubt that the private sector will build social housing units. There's absolutely no doubt they will, provided, as in anything, that they know they are going to be paid for the product they produce. I'm talking about that they know they are going to get their rents.

**1630**

It's rather interesting for me to hear that there's a great outcry because people have to pay 30% of their income for housing—32%, I guess it is, to be exact. I'm probably older than some in this room—not all, but some—and I can remember when I was out looking at rents and I was looking at buying a house etc. Then, they said, "Don't ever spend more than 50%." I can assure you we didn't have cable TV and call display, portable phones and all of these things. I guess in your mind you have to decide what is really necessary. Is it good housing, an apartment, or a portable phone etc? Just a couple of comments. I still believe, and with my own children, that if you want to buy something, make sure it's not going to cost you more than that 50% if you do.

Anyway, there certainly are families in this province who are facing housing problems. There's no doubt we're going to address them and I think, to a point, we have. That is, there is close to \$30 million worth of increase—\$29 million to be exact—in the social housing portion of this particular budget.

Would you like to comment on that and maybe explain this item, what the taxpayer can see with the extended programs down the road?



**Hon Mr Clement:** I'd be very happy to, and thank you for your perspectives on it. If I can just add parenthetically, the challenges one faces in government become altogether different when you're in a boom period versus when you're in a recession. Of course, when you're in a recession—which my colleagues to the right of me had the misfortune of having to deal with, I suppose, although I think they did contribute to that in some fashion—of course vacancy rates decline because people put off moving out of the home of their parents, or put off immigrating to our province because they don't want to be part of an economy that isn't creating jobs and opportunity. Our challenge is to deal with our success, to deal with our prosperity, and that's a particularly complex challenge.

But yes, we have had almost a \$29-million increase in the social housing portion of the budget. We spend about \$1.5 billion every year to subsidize social housing in this province. Subsidies to each of the 275,000 non-profit units per unit are about \$10,000 per year.

We're trying to do this in a way that helps Ontarians. That's our job. But that means taxpayers too. They have to make sure that every dollar we spend on this reaches its goal, does its job. That's part of it too. If money is spent with the best of intentions but doesn't do what it's supposed to do, we have not only failed the person we're trying to help but we've also failed the taxpayer. That's the kind of discipline that we've added to government in the last four years.

When we look at maintenance and repairs, I can tell you it's required on all current housing stock. We've made adjustments to make sure it reflects the true nature of how this money was being spent. It's being allocated on operating expenses, rather than just capital expenses. That meant we've moved \$48 million from the capital budget to the operating budget, which I think is more realistic. It's more commonsensical.

I can tell you as well that through a little bit of serendipity but also through good management practices, we've saved nearly \$20 million in mortgage rates. If you offset the \$48-million increase with the \$20 million, you've got a \$28-million increase in the social housing budget because we plowed all that money back in.

We do want to tackle the housing issue—this is part of our mandate, it's part of what Ontarians expect of us—but we have to do it in the right way. You can't just rely on the old ways of doing things, which clearly are not working any more. I doubt sometimes whether they worked in the initial phase as well. Maybe we just hid it better in the days when we spent money but didn't account for it in the same way that taxpayers expect us to do now.

Throwing money at the problem doesn't help. We've got to ensure that we have a good plan that actually makes sure the money is focused in on where it should be spent.

I can go through a little bit of the litany, Mr Chair, if I have your indulgence. Under the previous Liberal government here in Ontario, rental housing starts fell by

21.4% and total housing starts declined by 40.5%. That was between 1987 and 1990, just for the Chair's records. The NDP was a complete disaster. Rental housing stocks plummeted by 74.4% during their mandate and total housing starts declined by 43% during their mandate.

Would I like to see housing starts higher than they are now? Absolutely. But do you know what? At least the private rental unit starts have gone up under a Mike Harris government. Total housing starts have increased by 50%. These are auspicious trends. They show that the market in housing is starting to heal itself. Again, if I had a magic wand, it should all be done tomorrow, but you know, it took us 20 years to get into this hole and it does take a little bit of time to get out of the hole that was dug by previous governments, to be brutally frank. Perhaps I can be even more frank and say, governments of all three political stripes.

We've learned a lot from those years. We've learned a lot of what not to do. When you try to impose a solution and say, "Government can do it better. Government can build these units better," do you know what? You spend a lot of money on administration and a lot of money on extraneous expense. Do you know what we found out? Not a lot of the money goes to the people we are trying to help. That is the biggest crime of all, I think, and what we are determined to avoid.

I hope that answers your question. I remain optimistic. Maybe I'm an optimistic person by nature, but I see tangible evidence of the market healing itself and having a direct positive impact on women and men and their families who are seeking the kind of accommodation that should be available in a province like Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O'Toole.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Thank you for a very informative session here. Just switching the subject a bit, I know it's an important area for all of us, but I'd like to look at regional restructuring, if I could. I see there's a line item in the budget that there is a reduction.

Just a little background: As you would know, Minister, I have for a brief period of time, perhaps the last 10 or 15 years, been involved in local government and regional government in Durham region. I can even recall when the regions were formed, some 25 years ago. It was quite a visionary activity at the time but very controversial, not unlike the whole debate around the city of Toronto debate which is very controversial, trying to wring out waste and inefficiencies and streamline. We just use more sophisticated words today, but they were all there at that time as well.

I see a member of your staff here whom I've seen on previous occasions as part of those restructuring reports, very professionally done. I was on council in 1990 when the Ottawa-Carleton single-tier study was looked at. There were arguments for and against, the very issue to which your ministry has now appointed special advisers.

I guess the point I am trying to make is, it's not new. I think it's expected of government to show vision and leadership. In fact, I think the whole GTA debate itself started—I don't know, I'm not an academic, but probably

20 years ago I remember reading a report, I think it was called Vision 2020 at the time, about the GTA and its potential outreaches.

How does this apply really? The signal you've sent to the four municipal areas that are looking at restructuring, what's the message for Durham region, or any of the regions in the GTA? There is this new legislative structure around it. But we know Ajax and Pickering are in discussions as we speak about what to do. The whole region of Durham has a special committee looking at governance and duplication.

I go back to previous government, to give them some credit. The Golden commission was looking at the same issues and how to restructure. Have you got any advice?

Perhaps that formed the question that I would put to you. In the budget you've removed about \$44 million from a line item. That was part of the municipal restructuring fund. In the context I've just described, the ongoing anxiety of change, is that an appropriate budget reduction of \$44.5 million?

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**Hon Mr Clement:** I thank you for the question and just to put that on the record, because that was part of the original municipal restructuring fund. That phase of our municipal restructuring is winding down and so it is entirely appropriate that the funding for that would start to wind down as well.

We're also learning lessons along the way here. Of course, the city of Toronto amalgamation will remain in the record books for a while as the largest amalgamation in terms of population affected in the history of Ontario, I dare say. We also have smaller municipalities that are part of the restructuring as well, so the process of dealing with that streamlining is going to become more efficient as well.

I can say to the committee that we've approved about 118 restructuring proposals to date and that reduces the number of municipalities from about 815 down to 586. Again for the record, the number of municipal politicians has been decreased by 1,059. I think I said yesterday but maybe I'll state it for the record again that municipalities have so far reported a total savings of more than \$220 million annually. This process is ongoing. We've had a lot of backing from a lot of sources. Even Dalton McGuinty has encouraged us to get on with the job of restructuring in Ottawa-Carleton, for instance. I'd like to thank Mr McGuinty for his confidence that we're on the right track to create stronger, better and more efficient municipalities.

That's what it's all about: making sure that we are delivering better services more efficiently, better services for less cost to the taxpayer. The taxpayer is the one who is footing the bill for overlapping and duplication. It means more streamlined government because of fewer politicians, or fewer levels of government in certain instances, and it means more accountability as a result of that. Those are the criteria that we are using in all of these cases.

You mentioned specifically Durham. I want to talk about that because as part of the GTA we've signalled that we want to make sure that the GTSB knows precisely what its terms of references are. We've given them a little bit of time. It's a new body, a new committee or board that is now on the scene that is taking a very aggressive and long-overdue stance on transportation issues, making sure there's integration on transportation issues throughout the GTA. How did they get the authority to do that? It was through our decisions. They've got to work out some of their terms of reference a little bit first and we've given them time to do that.

It is very heartening to know that there are municipalities even within the GTA that are taking the lead and starting to consider and consult, starting to do reports and the research on how to deliver better services for less for the taxpayers.

I would only encourage Pickering and Ajax and the region of Durham, just as I am encouraging my own home region of Peel and the constituent municipalities within that region, and indeed anyone else who needs that encouragement, to initiate these processes, get some information on the table, discuss these issues with your citizenry. I think we can all say as politicians that there are always new and creative ways to deliver services better. It is our job, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, to find those solutions, to be creative in the ways to do so.

Maybe in 1974 the way we had it set up in the GTA regions was the way to do it, but is it entirely appropriate in 1999? In some instances perhaps so, in other instances perhaps not, but we have to go through that process. By taking the lead in Pickering and Ajax and in the region of Durham, they are starting a process that will be very positive for the taxpayers in your region. That's how we're going to judge things as a caucus and as a government.

**Mr O'Toole:** Just a quick follow up, if I may. It may not be a fair question, Minister, but there's a municipal election in the year 2000. Are you expecting anything particularly interesting in that context? There may have to be some changes for that particular municipal election in the year 2000. Is that in any way being discussed?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Certainly in the areas where we have the special advisers, the ministry and the government have announced the intent to move as expeditiously as feasible upon the release of the special advisers' reports. Our intention at least, if at all possible, is to have some solutions in place for the upcoming municipal elections in those particular regions. Other regions are already initiating some proposals which we will obviously take and duly consider as expeditiously as possible.

I am reluctant to say, *carte blanche*, that all of this should be in place for the 2000 elections. In some cases it will be appropriate and in other cases, because of the complexity—there are no cookie-cutter solutions here. Each individual region and municipality and county has to be looked at according to its individual circumstances. That requires some deliberation. We are not in the



business of, "Ready, fire, aim"; we're in the business of doing things right for the taxpayers of Ontario and to ensure that those services are delivered efficiently and effectively. I would prefer to look at it on a case-by-case basis with respect to those municipalities outside of the four that have been held up for particular attention with respect to the special advisers.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute.

**Mr Stewart:** I wanted to get back to social housing again, Minister, if I may. Certainly, if you look at the estimates binder, a large portion of the municipal affairs and housing estimates is made up of social housing. They're now being shifted so that the municipalities will pick up a major portion of the cost. I use the word "shifted" because I believe the Who Does What initiative was a shift of services to the level of government that can best do them and can best do them at the best price. I'm also very concerned about who pays the bills and how they're collected. Could you give me an idea on how the ministry deals with municipalities for the costs that are related to this service?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Sure. There have been some changes in this area. I believe it was in early 1997 that we announced the local services realignment and that transferred the responsibility of social housing to the municipality. That's when it was done. The funding responsibility of social housing was transferred effective January 1, 1998, through what we called the Social Housing Funding Act, 1997. As a result of that, the billing to municipalities is based on what we call the actual cash flows, so the bill for a specific month is an estimate of the subsidies for that month and then is adjusted in the next month to reflect the actual amount of the subsidy, because, of course, this shifts and changes over time. We have found a high level of credibility with this billing process. We expect that the initial forecast of social housing costs provided to the municipalities in early 1998 was about \$876 million and was based on current provided budgets. We later reduced that by \$40 million when we announced that the dedicated supportive housing would not be devolved to the municipalities.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Caplan.

**Mr Caplan:** I have many questions to go over, Chair. I'm going to try to be very direct and I would hope that you would direct the minister to give direct and succinct answers to the questions I'm going to ask.

First of all, I'd like to thank the staff of the ministry for providing a list of properties in response to the question that I asked yesterday here in committee. However, there is one difficulty. This is the official Hansard of the Ontario Legislature and I'll just read you the response of the honourable Chair of Management Board of Cabinet, who says, "There are a few pieces of property that, with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we'll consider for sites to help the homeless." He says, "On the specifics, he"—referring to myself—"can ask the Minister ... exactly which properties."

I've been provided a list of all properties that have been in the tender by the Ontario Realty Corp. First of

all, did the Chair of Management Board misinform the House? Exactly which properties are up for affordable housing projects?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No. Absolutely not.

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**Mr Caplan:** OK. Then would the minister or the ministry staff be so good as to indicate which of the hundreds in this list are specifically being designated for affordable housing projects.

**Hon Mr Clement:** We are going through that process right now and I indicated to you yesterday—

**Mr Caplan:** So that has not happened.

**Hon Mr Clement:** —to be fair to me and to be fair to the record of this committee, that this was a very complex process. It's all very well to say that this particular land is available, but then we have to make sure that it is appropriate in terms of the services that are available, that it is the most appropriate for a housing initiative.

So the answer to your question is, in the fullness of time when we make sure we get it right, when we make sure we have a process that gets it right for the people of Ontario, you will find out as soon as we find out.

**Mr Caplan:** The commitment by the Harris government was made eight months ago. I would submit that the work is proceeding incredibly slowly, if it has proceeded at all.

I have several questions regarding the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, which the minister alluded to in his opening remarks. I'd like to ask how many hearing sites or locations have been closed since June 1998 and where those locations are. If the minister or the staff members cannot provide the answers here today, and they certainly can be provided at a later time, I would understand.

**Ms Carol Kiley:** I'm Carol Kiley. I'm the manager with the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. Since June 1998 there have been no hearing sites closed—June 17 is when we started—there have been no district offices or client service offices closed. We're still hearing all of our hearings in the county seat of the county where the residential complex is located. If that isn't convenient, if the tenants would rather go to one of our district offices, we can accommodate them that way.

**Mr Caplan:** If I may, further: The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal used to hear cases in Richmond Hill. Is that correct?

**Ms Kiley:** That's correct.

**Mr Caplan:** Do they any longer?

**Ms Kiley:** Yes.

**Mr Caplan:** They used to hear them in Brighton and Napanee. Do they still do that?

**Ms Kiley:** Yes.

**Mr Caplan:** The information in a letter from the chair of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal indicates that this is no longer the case.

**Ms Kiley:** The letter that went out, I think it was in August or September 1999, what that did was redistribute the caseload so that applications for Richmond Hill or Napanee or certain of the areas that you mentioned would be heard by adjudicators from the North York office

rather than from the central office, which was located in Mississauga. That change came about because we found that those adjudicators in Mississauga were spending too much of their time travelling and it was easier for the adjudicators from North York. So it was never a change in office, merely a change in how the tribunal itself distributed its workload.

**Mr Caplan:** So you are still hearing cases in Richmond Hill.

**Ms Kiley:** Absolutely.

**Mr Caplan:** You are still hearing cases in Napanee.

**Ms Kiley:** Yes.

**Mr Caplan:** OK. Thank you.

Are there any plans for closures of any of the sites? The letter of the chair of the tribunal indicates that there would be further reorganization of the hearing sites and locations.

**Ms Kiley:** I don't have the letter with me, so I can't recall exactly how it was worded. I think the intention has always been not to close sites or reduce access but to redistribute the workload. As you must understand, we did not really know where our workload would be coming from when we set up our offices and our locations. We're looking at redistributing workload but not limiting access in any way.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Can I just add, to make sure the record is completely clear on this: The tribunal is doing the operational review, and in the future they may make some recommendations, of which I'm not aware at present but I'm thinking ahead here. If they make recommendations in the future that can deliver better services for less, which means a potential reallocation, that's something we would have to look at. That's the criterion: It would have to be at least the same level of service or better.

**Mr Caplan:** OK. I certainly at this point take the minister at his word.

Have there been closures of document filing centres? If there have been, how many, and where are they, please?

**Ms Kiley:** There was one document filing centre in—I can't recall where—

**Mr Caplan:** Newmarket?

**Ms Kiley:** Newmarket—that did not wish to continue. We did not close it; they didn't want the business, so we were looking to replace that one.

Again, the minister is absolutely right. The operational review may lead us to do things more cost-efficiently while providing the same level of access, but as of now I think it was just the one in Newmarket. There may have been one in Windsor that we relocated.

**Mr Caplan:** Are there any plans to close—I guess pending the operational review, as you mention.

**Hon Mr Clement:** That's correct.

**Mr Caplan:** That's fine.

**Ms Kiley:** We're also looking into ways in which we can utilize the common counters and other access points.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

**Ms Kiley:** The common counters—what are they called?—shared services bureaus of the government.

**Mr Caplan:** I had earlier been advised that particularly in northern Ontario and remote areas there is the use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing. Could you tell me how many times each one of those procedures has been used by the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal since June 1998.

**Ms Kiley:** I can't give you that figure. I can find that out.

**Mr Caplan:** I would appreciate that.

**Ms Kiley:** You want both teleconference and video—

**Mr Caplan:** If you could break it out.

**Ms Kiley:** Just in northern Ontario?

**Mr Caplan:** No, in the province.

**Ms Kiley:** In the province, OK. I can find that out.

**Mr Caplan:** That would be greatly appreciated.

**Hon Mr Clement:** We'll submit it to the committee.

**Mr Caplan:** Yes, and where the sites are specifically that it's being offered out of, if that be Sudbury, Toronto, Windsor, wherever it happens to be.

**Ms Kiley:** Sure. I'll get you the information.

**Mr Caplan:** I have more of a philosophical question specifically for the minister. You are a lawyer by training, I understand. Yes?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Yes, I am.

**Mr Caplan:** In a quasi-judicial or judicial process, one of the most important aspects, I'm told—I'm not a lawyer, sir, just so you understand—is the ability to assess the credibility of the various participants. Yes? That's a tenet, yes?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Certainly in the case of evidence, you're quite right.

**Mr Caplan:** How is an adjudicator supposed to assess credibility over the phone? Doesn't a judge or a quasi-judicial arbitrator or adjudicator need to be able to see the person to be able to get a sense of credibility?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me give you a hypothetical. In some cases, the evidence is in dispute and therefore you have to weigh the different depositions on the evidence and make a finding, either implicit or explicit, as to credibility because you've got to weigh the evidence. There are other cases where the evidence is not in dispute and there's a legal issue involved where credibility is less of a factor and it's merely a case of deciding how the law is to be applied.

**Mr Caplan:** That's well and good, but if credibility is an issue, and it often is in judicial or quasi-judicial matters, how is an adjudicator supposed to assess credibility over the telephone?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I'll tell you, this is the challenge for all judicial and quasi-judicial tribunals and courts because there is an increasing use in evidentiary issues of other means of obtaining evidence, which are sometimes less direct than historically has been the case in our common law system.

I guess through the jurisprudence there has been an ability of our adjudicators in this province and throughout Canada to do the proper weighing of evidence.



Sometimes that evidence is directed person to person. Sometimes it is evidence that is weighed that is not the usual, I guess, historical way of dealing with these cases. That's part of their job as adjudicators. If they don't feel comfortable, then that's one case.

I should say that if you're referring to the tribunal, they've never done a telephone hearing, just so you know.

**Mr Caplan:** So teleconferencing has never happened?

**Hon Mr Clement:** In terms of the hearing part, that's the information I'm led to believe.

**Mr Caplan:** OK. That's fine.

**Hon Mr Clement:** There might be mediations and things like that.

**Mr Caplan:** Sure. There are other things that the tribunal does. I would submit that the tenant is at a distinct disadvantage in terms of being able to have credibility assessed by a telephone conversation, and I would hope that it would be the ministry's desire to see that justice is equally available to both participants in any kind of dispute.

I have a question, as well, regarding the provisions of harassment under the Tenant Protection Act. First of all, how many investigations, how many prosecutions, and how many convictions have there been for harassment since June 1998?

**Ms Kiley:** I have estimates. I don't have actuals. We've had about 1,400 to 1,500 applications for tenant rights, and those include harassment.

**Mr Caplan:** Of the 1,500 applications, how many resulted in conviction?

**Ms Kiley:** Our investigations unit is separate from the tribunal. It's under the auspices of the ministry. I think there are 20 cases currently being prosecuted. I don't have the actual figures. I would have to get that for you.

**Mr Caplan:** You can provide the actual investigations, prosecutions and convictions?

**Hon Mr Clement:** We'll undertake to circulate that to the committee.

**Mr Caplan:** Thank you very much.

How many default orders by the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal have been issued since June 1998?

**Ms Kiley:** Forty-five per cent of all of the orders issued are default orders.

**Mr Caplan:** Forty-five per cent of all orders?

**Ms Kiley:** Forty-five per cent of all orders are default orders.

**Mr Caplan:** Where essentially people haven't responded and so a default order is issued?

**Ms Kiley:** It's where people have not indicated that they wish to dispute the application.

**Mr Caplan:** Correct. But how many default orders have there been?

**Ms Kiley:** I'm trying to think. I know there were 60,000 applications as of June 1999. I couldn't tell you exactly, but I would suspect it's around 30,000.

**Mr Caplan:** You can provide specific figures?

**Ms Kiley:** I will provide actual stats for you as of the end of October.

**Mr Caplan:** That would be acceptable.

Did the ministry project an expected number of default orders that would be issued when it set up the system? Do you project ahead and say, "We expect there will be so many types of cases"? What was that figure?

**Ms Kiley:** We based our projections initially on the information we received from the Attorney General, because they had heard the landlord and tenant cases prior to the tribunal. The Attorney General had a 70% default rate. We felt that since our access was more informal, we didn't project that high a default rate, so we projected initially 60%.

**Mr Caplan:** You've had 45%?

**Ms Kiley:** We've had 45%, so we've had more disputes filed, by 20%, than we had anticipated.

**Mr Caplan:** More disputes filed by?

**Ms Kiley:** Yes, more people filed a dispute and said they wanted to go ahead to a hearing, so the application could not go to a default.

**Hon Mr Clement:** One of the conclusions is that the process is more accessible now, because more are taking advantage of it.

**Mr Caplan:** So the 45% number, you're suggesting that's an acceptable figure to you?

**Hon Mr Clement:** The figure is the figure.

**Mr Caplan:** I understand, but is that considered to be an acceptable figure to the ministry?

**Hon Mr Clement:** What do you mean by "acceptable"? Do you mean that we're happy?

**Mr Caplan:** That a certain number of default orders have been issued, as opposed to people who respond to defend themselves.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think we're neutral on it. We have a system in place to allow tenants and landlords to ensure that their rights are upheld, and I think we're neutral as to the outcome as long as the process is a fair and reasonable process.

**Mr Caplan:** I understand there's a three-step process to set aside a default order, or a three-step test, if you will. Is that correct?

**Ms Kiley:** If you have a default order issued—it means you have not responded or have not disputed or have not called us or faxed us to let us know that you wish to dispute it—and a default order is issued, you can file for a set-aside within 11 days. The test is quite simple. The test is that you were not reasonably able to participate. That's the only test.

**Mr Caplan:** That's it? You don't have to provide an excuse for why you didn't file a response? You don't have to demonstrate that you attempted to act quickly? You don't have to have a good defence on the merits of the matter? I understood that to be the three-step test that is being imposed by the rental housing tribunal in order to achieve a set-aside.

**Ms Kiley:** The legislation is quite clear. The only test to be granted a set-aside is that you were not reasonably able to participate. The case is then heard. If you have convinced an adjudicator that you were not reasonably able to participate because of illness—I don't know what

kinds of excuses or what kinds of situations they consider; I'm not an adjudicator—then the case is heard on its merits.

**Mr Caplan:** That's very interesting, because I had occasion to be at a legal clinic here in Ontario, in fact, just last week, and I was told by the folks at the legal clinic that in their opinion it is easier to set aside the judgment of a court than it is to set aside a matter that's had a default order in the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal setting. I'm going to relay your response to that legal clinic, because obviously there is some miscommunication somewhere about what the process is and how it is supposed to operate.

I trust that I can bring these matters to the minister's attention if the correct procedures are not being followed in certain jurisdictions in areas in Ontario.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Absolutely, you can. May I say, as well, maybe we're confronting a bit of human nature here. Under the old system, there was no consequence for being involved in the process, and now there is a consequence, so one has to keep that in mind as well. If the process was free and available and whatnot, then of course people are going to use the process.

I think we have to make sure the process is accessible. That should be our absolute number one aim. At the same time, we don't want frivolity to be the order of the day. We're trying to get to that balance. If there is a particular problem in a particular area, let us know.

**Mr Caplan:** I will be sure and do that.

Minister, as well, you mentioned in your comments today that you have recently signed the federal-provincial deal on housing.

**Hon Mr Clement:** That is correct.

**Mr Caplan:** Congratulations.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you very much. I am very pleased to have been able to do that.

**Mr Caplan:** I understand you anticipate realizing some approximately \$100 million from this deal. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Clement:** A hundred million? I'm not sure about that. Janet Mason, who is our chief negotiator, is here. I'd ask her to come up to the front. I'm aware of the \$50 million, in terms of the amount that has been made available to us because of the calculations, that we can then plow back into the rental supplements. Plus we've got the \$30-million portion that is designed for capital—

**Mr Caplan:** Perhaps we could get into the other, if I could ask you, Minister. The \$50 million that you're going to put into rent supplements, I don't seem to find it in the estimates here, although the program was announced back in March. Can you please show me the page where I could find the \$50-million figure?

**Hon Mr Clement:** That was the problem, you see, because the negotiations dragged on and on, and we were getting quite frustrated. I must say—

**Mr Caplan:** Is that the regular course of events, that announcements are made without the dollars to support it being in place?

**Hon Mr Clement:** No. I want to assure the honourable member on this. At one point we had a federal government that was seeking an agreement, then we had a federal government that decided not to seek an agreement, and then they decided to seek the agreement again. That's why there has been a length of time, but I'm very pleased and wish to applaud Minister Gagliano for signing the agreement today. That allows us, because of the way the federal funds are calculated, to divert some of those funds that are saved as a result of the calculation for those women and men and their families most in need of rental supplements. That's 10,000 families, as a result of these calculations, who are going to get rental supplements.

**The Vice-Chair:** With that wonderful note—

**Mr Caplan:** My time is up?

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes, your time is up.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm sure there will be another round.

**The Vice-Chair:** I wanted the opportunity to warn the members that when coming into a committee meeting, would you mind either leaving your cellular phones outside or turning them off when you get inside here. They could be interrupting the proceedings.

The next round would have been the NDP. They're not here. I presume that the round then goes to the Conservatives.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I wonder if we could have a ruling. Being as the third party isn't here, what are we going to do with their time? Are we going to divide the remaining time equally?

1710

**The Vice-Chair:** The fact is that it's your rotation now and you could take your twenty minutes now.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** OK. Thank you, Chair.

Minister, almost two years ago we had one of the most—well, I guess it was the most devastating natural disaster in Canadian history. We see every day pictures on television of what earthquakes do and what hurricanes do. The ice storm that hit eastern Ontario and Quebec was absolutely devastating. While I didn't get down into eastern Ontario, we do have a number of friends who sent us photos of what happened, and I have to say that I was totally shocked, having looked at those photos and seen the effect that it had on people's lives and property. I recall seeing one photo of a very large evergreen tree, I think it might have been a blue spruce, of which all that was left was the trunk; all the branches were stripped right off.

Now, of course, people's lives are essentially back in order, repairs are made. We've received many compliments from the people of eastern Ontario for our efforts. I wonder if you could share with us—you mentioned yesterday a figure of \$200 million, I believe, that was spent by our government and I think you said 80% of it was recoverable from the federal government. I wonder if you could give us an indication or maybe even detail—and if you can't, if one of the bureaucrats can—of what your ministry did to help the people of eastern Ontario.



**Hon Mr Clement:** I'd be very happy to go into some detail. Maybe I'd ask Elizabeth McLaren also to come up front to give her perspective a little bit as well, but I wouldn't mind starting out because this is what we hope to be a unique event, obviously, because of the tragedy involved and the great expense and human cost, if I can put it that way. This was the largest disaster in Canadian history, let's make no bones about that. Just to give you an example, six times more claims were submitted than for the Red River flood in Manitoba. If you are looking at comparators, nothing compares to this ice storm.

There were almost 30,000 insurance claims that had to be settled by the insurance industry, that totalled about \$52 million. Municipal damage estimates were around \$78 million, just on municipal damage. Then we had the ministry and their transfer agencies, which reported costs of about \$236 million. The municipal electric utilities reported costs of \$24 million. Ontario Hydro reported costs of \$250 million, and finally \$15 million for private poles and wires. We all have a memory of some of the human cost and the human discomfort and suffering, but there are some hard numbers as well.

We did act quickly and generously. We committed \$50 million immediately following the disaster. We committed \$11.9 million for the Emergency Help Fund, which was provided to municipalities and to victims in January and February, and then we announced this up to 4-to-1 ratio of provincial-local funding; that meant for every dollar that was raised locally, we'd be committing four dollars, and that was under the Ontario disaster relief assistance program.

There were a number of components—I'll let Liz talk a little bit about that—and there was this federal-provincial side agreement which cost-shared 50-50 some of the items that were particularly in need of being shared.

I would say we acted responsibly. We acted swiftly. There was an incredible amount of coordination that had to be done and I think we can all be proud of—I don't mean proud of our government. You expect your government to act in situations like this; I think proud of individuals in Ontario, who gave their time, who left their jobs to be there in a volunteer capacity, neighbours helping neighbours, strangers helping folks who needed help. There was a real confirmation of the community values that are so important in Ontario and that have made Ontario such a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family, if I can use that terminology.

Liz, do you want to go into some detail?

**Ms Elizabeth McLaren:** Certainly, Minister.

I'm Elizabeth McLaren. I'm the assistant deputy minister for the office for the greater Toronto area in the ministry. That's the long story why I did ice storm.

As the minister said, eastern Ontario began experiencing damaging ice storms on January 4, 1998, so we are approaching the second anniversary of that, leaving a large portion of eastern Ontario without electricity. Sixty-six municipalities were eventually declared in a state of emergency.

As the minister has said, the province responded quickly and generously. An initial commitment of \$50 million was made within days, with the promise that more money would be there as required. Again, as the minister has said and as Mr Wettlaufer said in his question, it is projected that \$201.6 million will eventually be eligible for cost-sharing with the federal government. So it was quite significant.

To give you some other details to show you the magnitude of the storm, 84,000 private insurance claims were filed with various insurance companies across Ontario and they have now been settled for in the neighbourhood of \$213 million, which is quite significant in Ontario terms.

As the minister said, we had six times more claims than the Red River flood and it was interesting that when the eastern Ontario disaster relief committee was established, which was the umbrella committee for the eight local committees established throughout the area, these local committees then sent out claim forms. The deadline date to submit a claim was June 15, 1998. By June 15—actually, over 50% of the claims came in the final two weeks, so not until June of last year—we received a total of 29,726 claims from individuals, farms and businesses. As the minister has stated, a lot of credit needs to be given to the volunteer committee, the eastern Ontario disaster relief committee, that worked. By May of this year, which was less than one year from the final date of submission for the claims, all 29,726 claims had been processed. That was a significant record, and faster than has been the case in other disasters, both in Ontario and across Canada.

What was interesting too was that when the committee had completed going through all 29,726 claims, because this disaster had evolved and the guidelines that were used to establish the claims had been changed, a decision was taken to go back over every one of those claims to make sure they had been handled fairly and equitably and that people had received exactly what they deserved. That review was completed and all claim payments were made to claimants by September 24 of this year. Through that second review, an additional \$11,416,000 was paid out. We think that review was certainly worthwhile in terms of claimants in eastern Ontario. The total assistance paid out to date by the eastern Ontario disaster relief committee is about \$49 million.

One of the other issues when claims of this magnitude are being handled is fairness and equity, so when the original claim payments were made, claimants were given an opportunity to ask that their claims be reconsidered. Out of the almost 30,000 claimants, only 1,000 requested a reconsideration of their claim. Of those, about 888—most of them—were reviewed. As I said, as we went through that second review period over this summer, those 888 were paid automatically as a result of improvement to the guidelines. Only 88 were actually ineligible and were to receive no further assistance.

1720

As of September 30 of this year, just to make sure that a fair process was implemented, the eastern Ontario disaster relief committee hired an independent ombuds adjuster to go back over those remaining 100 or so claims to make sure that they in truth had been dealt with equitably. The final 156 claims were reviewed by this outside adjuster and their claims settled by the end of September. So the eastern Ontario disaster relief committee who, when we asked them to serve, were assured they would only have to be there for six weeks, will now wind down their operations and we expect that the committee will be closed by December 31. So before we hit the two-year mark we hope to have said thank you to all the volunteers.

As you know, the payments to individuals was only a portion of the government's response to the ice storm. The government established a program, the ice storm assistance program, for public authorities. Because of the magnitude of the damages, it was determined that municipalities and conservation authorities, universities, schools and hospitals were also going to need some assistance in getting back to normal.

The municipalities so far have made claims for eligible ice storm costs. They make these claims on a quarterly basis. The sixth-quarter claims were submitted in August of this year and to date municipalities have received payments of \$53.5 million. This is generally the first time that municipalities have actually received any money during a disaster. Normally, it's expected that municipalities will bear their own costs, but because of the magnitude the government did institute this special program.

To ensure that all of these payments are being made appropriately and where they are needed, there is a joint federal-provincial audit, which is currently going on. We hope that the final quarterly claims from the municipalities—the final quarter was to have been September of this year. We are expecting those claims to be in by November of this year and we hope to be able to complete the audits and finalize the payments by March 2000.

We have worked closely with the federal government. This was Ontario's first opportunity, I guess, if you can put it that way, to participate in the federal government's disaster relief program. In order to be eligible for that program, the province has to spend \$1 per capita. So the provincial cost has to exceed the \$11 million to be able to even start.

We heard from our colleagues in other provinces that have not been as lucky and have had to access that federal program repeatedly: Quebec for several of their disasters, Manitoba and Alberta. There was a suggestion that there might be some difficulty in settling with the federal government, so we've worked very closely with the federal government and we have already received our first interim payment and they are continuing with their audits of the provincial ministries and of the municipalities. They are currently reviewing the books of the

eastern Ontario disaster relief committee and are assuring us that they are finding that everything is in order. So we hope to also set another record by being the first province to complete its audit by the federal government and we're hoping to get most of that share by March of next year.

Some of the other programs: You mentioned having pictures of the ice storm, and one of the things that will linger with us all is the sight of the devastation to the trees in eastern Ontario, because the forest cover in eastern Ontario will probably never recover. I've been told by foresters that my great-great-grandchildren will still be able to see the damage in the forest when they walk. So one of the things the government decided was necessary was to try to have some special program for trees and for tree replacement. We were able to negotiate some federal support.

The federal government had already announced in concert with us that there was going to be the \$70-million program to assist farmers and small businesses, and we were able to expand the eligibility of that to trees and to tree owners. Quite a detailed farm and tree assessment has gone on to provide extra assistance for people to clean out their wood lots.

One of the things we've learned that will be a benefit: Right after the ice storm, many foresters in the area were telling people which trees to cut down, and some people did act on that. We've now been studying areas where in fact the trees were not cut down, and we found that the trees that were recommended we should leave because they would recover were in fact the ones we should have cut, and the ones perhaps that we thought had lost 60% to 70% of their crown and would not survive but where we did say, "Don't say cut them. Let nature see what it will do," it's amazing. The last tour I had of some of the forests in eastern Ontario, those trees have come back. Foresters are now expecting that they will be able to eventually be harvested and possibly retain most of their value. There has been important science going on, and that science program will continue for I think another two years, until March 2002, so that we can follow that and be able to provide advice to farmers, and especially maple producers.

Maple producers were obviously very hard hit. The storm occurred in January. It was very hard for them to get out to clean their maple-producing fields, and they had a tough crop in 1998. We did try to get out and fast-track their claims in January and February of this year to ensure that they would be able to harvest the maple syrup and keep that very important Ontario industry alive and well.

Besides the tree program for individuals, we have also decided—one of the major municipal claims was also for tree replacement, because the municipal streets and the trees and also along the forests were also damaged. Again, we went back to the federal government and found out that our colleagues in Quebec had instituted a similar program. So we have been able, in August of this year actually, to announce yet another program to assist with tree replacement.



The municipalities are currently preparing tree replacement plans. One of the problems is that there really aren't enough seedlings in eastern Ontario for us to be able to do all of the plantings that will be necessary. Again, speaking of the science, you can't plant a maple tree seedling from southwestern Ontario in eastern Ontario; it doesn't have the same genetic background and it wouldn't survive. We're having to actually spend a lot of time this year harvesting seeds of the various varieties so that those seeds can be planted and trees grown so that over the next two to three years the municipalities will have the sorts of trees that are necessary and that they want and that will have the ability to survive in eastern Ontario.

We're working very closely in eastern Ontario with the municipalities, with our sister ministry, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and of course with the conservation authorities to make sure the money that we have for this tree program—it will work out to about \$8 million provincially—will be able to be distributed where it's needed most across eastern Ontario and in the municipalities that were the hardest hit in eastern Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms McLaren. I think the time for the Conservative comments or questions is up. Mr Colle.

**Mr Colle:** Mr Minister, as you know, what is happening more and more throughout the province is that we have development applications, and the developers are going directly to the Ontario Municipal Board. They are not, essentially, waiting for the decisions of local council or regional council. They are going directly to the Ontario Municipal Board, to that point that a lot of municipalities are now forced to dip into their reserves to pay for their legal representation at the OMB. Some municipalities like Uxbridge and Durham region may have to pass a special tax levy to pay for legal representation to the Ontario Municipal Board.

I say to you, this is not good planning. It's not the way to do planning, because what it really does is basically nullify official regional plans or local plans.

What is the ministry doing, especially in the 905 area, to stop this queue-jumping that the developers are doing and to recognize the integrity of local and regional plans?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you for the question. I'm going to ask Paula Dill to come forward, and in the meantime I do want to share with you, Michael, that we do have the list of the municipalities not known to have issued 1998 or 1999. I could share that with the clerk. Perhaps that can be photocopied for the committee.

1730

**Mr Colle:** I appreciate that.

**Ms Paula Dill:** I'm Paula Dill, the assistant deputy minister of the provincial-municipal relations division.

In response to your question, the Planning Act, as you know, was amended in 1996, and the time frames for making application—one of the objectives was to streamline the planning process.

**Mr Colle:** The 90-day provision was put in.

**Ms Dill:** Yes. You were referring to the fact that a municipality doesn't make a decision within 90 days and then there is an application that is referred to the Ontario Municipal Board, and you made reference to queue-jumping.

About three years ago, the average time frame to achieve a hearing at the Ontario Municipal Board was quite lengthy, so it was considered efficient and expeditious on the part of an applicant, if he felt he was going to go to the Ontario Municipal Board, that it wasn't going to receive a fair hearing or the right decision, in his opinion, from the council, to get in line. That has changed, and the hearing times that are available from the Ontario Municipal Board are quite efficient, so that does not exist in terms of the myth of lining up to get into the queue to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The official plan of the municipality is the document that is adopted and guides the framework for development, and there is a process, the natural justice process, where the Ontario Municipal Board is allowed to adjudicate on matters between the parties—the municipality and the developer—and obviously ratepayers are third parties.

That is the process that is in place. It's one of the fundamental underpinnings of the provincial planning system, and it seems to work well, so I don't think queue-jumping will help.

**Mr Colle:** I'm just wondering, how can it be good planning when the municipalities are faced with the spectre of raising taxes when the developer comes and says: "I've got this application. If you deny the application, the municipality may have to raise taxes to pay for legal representation to the OMB"? How can this be good planning when the planning is basically based on the fact of affordability? Developers know that. What they are doing is, they've got deep pockets. They go to the OMB. They can hire the best lawyers money can buy. The local municipality, on the other hand, says, "If I fight this at the OMB, I may have to put on a special levy." Therefore, where is the integrity of local or regional planning if you can essentially go to the OMB and supersede what has been worked on for years by the regional government or local government?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me just say this: The OMB is there to be an unbiased, fair way for disputes between parties to be heard and resolved. That's the essence of the OMB, so if the municipality wants to defend its official plan, they have every right to be there, and that's the way they do it. I'm not sure what you're suggesting as an alternative.

**Mr Colle:** They can't afford to defend their official plan because they don't have the money and the resources to match the legal clout that the developers have. I gave you a couple of cases in point. I know the town of Richmond Hill has had to now set up a special reserve fund of \$1 million to fight for their rights at the OMB. As I said, Uxbridge is contemplating a special tax levy. Durham region may have to do the same thing. Good

planning shouldn't be based on whether or not you can afford it.

In some cases, municipalities have decided not to go to the OMB and have settled with the developer, not because they agreed with the development application but because they thought they could save the taxpayers money by not going to the OMB. So we're essentially seeing the economics of planning supersede the good community-based planning which, by the way, they've spent millions of dollars doing. As you know, the official plan process as it goes on in regions costs tons of money.

So the plans sit there, and eventually the developers say, "I don't care what this plan is; I'm going to go to the adjudicator, around the plan process, and make them adjudicate it." So you take your chance with the adjudicator, and I know that in some cases they have made some good decisions. There was the recent one down at the bottom of Toronto here, and I applaud them for doing that. I'm just saying, what happens to a local municipality now that has this plan that used to protect them, supposedly, that is no longer protection? In fact, they are now intimidated by the cost factor of protecting their planning process and they can't afford to do it.

**Ms Dill:** Generally speaking, OMB hearings that you are referring to are not the norm. A normal hearing is not a huge million-dollar hearing. So if you put that in perspective overall within the system, the average hearing is not that large in terms of dollars. However—

**Mr Colle:** Wait a minute now. You have to hire traffic planners, sound, water, hydrologists—it gets up into hundreds of thousands of dollars, and you know that. It is a big cost to municipalities, and it's not just the hearing per se. You have to have the experts because you know the developer's going to have a whole battery of experts defending their case, which they have the right to do.

**Ms Dill:** What I was going to say was that overall, on average, they're not that kind. In those specific hearings that you're speaking about, there are major urban expansions and significant growth-related issues that are at stake, as well as technical issues, that are going to be tested before the board. The issue in terms of whether the municipality is prepared at this point in time may be the watershed issue that would be tested. The official plan document, over time, should provide the municipality the up-to-date security or the policies within which they would guide development.

What is happening in these hearings is the municipalities' plans are being tested with respect to new information. In other words, as development gets more sophisticated, the official plan has to keep up with it. The initial test at the outset for the major principle-of-development issues is being tested there. After that happens, the municipality has the strength and the security and in fact the OMB behind it on its plan in terms of the test.

**Mr Colle:** But they don't have the financial resources to match the developers, especially in the significant ones you've talked about. Those are the ones I'm worried about. The large, significant developments are—no pun

intended—very taxing on local ratepayers. All of a sudden you've got them at a great disadvantage. This is a trend I'm just alerting the minister to that is very worrisome, because if this continues, it'll mean essentially development based on one's ability to finance your experts at the Ontario Municipal Board. I don't think that was the original intention of the Ontario Municipal Board, but it's becoming a very expensive proposition. It's costing municipalities hundreds, if not millions, of dollars.

I just wondered how many of these applications, since you changed the legislation, have gone directly to the OMB. Do we have any idea of how many of those there are?

**Ms Dill:** I don't have the—

**Mr Colle:** Could I get that at a future date?

**Ms Dill:** Yes.

**Mr Colle:** Just to see, as a result of the legislative change—

**Ms Dill:** Are you talking about for all of Ontario?

**Mr Colle:** Yes, I'd be interested in all of it. Most of it would be, I would think, in the southern Ontario region. I would think most of the major ones have been—

**Hon Mr Clement:** Just so I get it right, because there are thousands of applications that go before the OMB: You're asking for the ones where the developer went directly to the OMB?

**Mr Colle:** Yes, they went directly to the OMB. They didn't wait the 90 days.

**Hon Mr Clement:** OK.

**Ms Dill:** It will take some time to collect that information.

**Mr Colle:** I would appreciate that. I'd like to have that just to see the reaction to the legislative change, so I have that at my disposal.

**Hon Mr Clement:** And you understand why it's not our information? It's usually the municipality and the developer, in your scenario, going at it at the OMB—the ministry may be not be represented there—and it's a quasi-judicial tribunal.

**Mr Colle:** No, but the OMB is an agency of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, so I hope you would have that information.

**Hon Mr Clement:** We will undertake to request that information from the OMB. That's the only source we have for that information.

**Mr Colle:** Yes. If you could get that from the Ontario Municipal Board for me, I'd appreciate that.

I'll just pass it over to my colleague.

**Mr Caplan:** I understand, Mr Chair, that as a member of the Liberal caucus you wanted to ask a question.

**The Vice-Chair:** I have a quick question. Mr Colle, do you want to take the chair?

**The Acting Chair (Mr Mike Colle):** Mr Curling, you have the floor.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** Minister, over the years Frontiers Foundation usually gets some funds from the ministry—sometimes from the



Ministry of Housing and I think sometimes from Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

The Frontiers Foundation is a non-profit organization that helps First Nations people rehabilitate their homes. I know this might be pretty new, but some of the wonderful and efficient staff you have behind you are quite aware of this. I'm not putting you on the spot at all from that point of view.

1740

I just wondered if you could look into the matter of having some funding given to those homes in order to rehabilitate them. They have not had those funds, and some of the First Nations people are living in some terrible conditions. It's not an extraordinary amount of money. Can you tell us if the ministry has ever taken a look at that kind of funding, and if not, would you assure me that you will do so and that some funding could flow into the Frontiers Foundation to assist them?

**Mr Fenn:** Mr Chairman, maybe I can respond. The member is correct that in the past through the Community Futures program there was funding of a variety of organizations, including the one to which he referred. As the member will be aware, the government felt it was worthwhile to have municipalities in a position of decision-making on these kinds of programs and to fund them where they were seen to be of benefit to finding housing or dealing with relocation issues, and the government has announced the transfer of that program and the money associated with it to municipalities.

As the minister indicated, we have certainly taken a position that these kinds of local, community, neighbourhood-based decisions about housing matters and other issues of this kind are better handled by community governments, because they are community issues. Perhaps the appropriate direction for that request would be on the municipal governments, which are now in a position to make those determinations and to decide whether grants of that sort are well placed with organizations such as that.

**Mr Curling:** While I appreciate the deputy minister's response, you know that it's kind of a nice shift to say it could be handled by the community, but the fact is that it's not being done. At this moment, as you go through this transitional time of who should take responsibility, there are people living in very appalling conditions. I would ask the minister if he could look into the matter even in this transitional time to see that some of this is being done.

The winter is coming again, and people are living in very appalling conditions. They're a voluntary organization and will assist so that the costs are not extraordinary. Could you somehow give me some reassurance that this project could be looked at for some funding? It's not an enormous amount of money. I just wondered if the minister would take the responsibility to look into the matter and see about some funding.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Certainly what I can suggest to you, Alvin, is that if you've got some information you'd like me to see, I encourage you to give me that informa-

tion. It seems as if you've got a pretty good handle on this particular project. So if you would like to share some information with me, I'd very much like to see it, and at that time, I can give you an appropriate response.

**Mr Curling:** Thank you very much. That's all I need.

**Mr Caplan:** I still have a number of questions. I'll try to get them all in under the time.

**The Acting Chair:** It's about six minutes, I think.

**Mr Caplan:** Currently Bill 11 is before the House. It changes the Ontario Housing Corp to the Ontario Mortgage Corp. What is the intention of the ministry in making that kind of a change? Is the ministry indicating that they're getting out of housing entirely? Please, could you explain what the rationale is behind that change in designation?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I think we are trying to signal that we are continuing to change the way we see social housing being delivered in this province. I wouldn't put it in quite the terms that you put it, but as I say, I indicated earlier that we're moving away from bricks and mortar, that we don't see it as advisable that that is our long-term mandate. That apparently is similar to what the federal government has decided as well, although I guess we'll wait and see in the next budget.

We see our role as helping the individual through a combination of rent-geared-to-income supplements and a properly functioning private sector that can help us create the housing stock that we all need here in Ontario. That's the underlying philosophy of what we're doing, and we are trying to disentangle ourselves from some failed policies of the past.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm going to save the debate for the House, but thank you for the answer. In the estimates as well, and you did make reference to it in your opening statement, there is \$4 million for a provincial sales tax rebate. My question to you, Minister, is, how many of these funds have been spent to date and how many requests have been made for this funding?

**Hon Mr Clement:** It's part of the budget bill.

**Mr Fenn:** Yes, as the minister indicates, it's part of the budget bill. It's a program that is about to be announced or about to be rolled out. The application process will be backdated to the date to which the member referred.

**Hon Mr Clement:** We do have to have the bill passed a little bit before we—

**Mr Fenn:** I would make the other observation, which is that the intent is that it show good faith on the part of the province, because the primary objective is, of course, to have a similar concession from the federal government in connection with the GST, which would be much more significant.

**Mr Caplan:** So far you are saying you have to make legislative changes in order to have access to these dollars.

**Mr Fenn:** Mr Chairman, I misled the minister. It's not in the budget bill, but the program announcement is coinciding with the budget bill.

**Mr Caplan:** I thought the program announcement was made last March.

**Mr Fenn:** The program was announced, but the application forms, the information about how to make the claims, that kind of thing is—

**Hon Mr Clement:** And then what we're doing is that we're backdating it so it will be available retrospectively.

**Mr Caplan:** So there have been no applications and no funds spent but people can apply and it will backdate back to the March 23rd announcement or back to the date of the budget?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I'm presuming to the announcement.

**Mr Fenn:** There's an effective date in the material. I'm not sure exactly what it is, but it's in there.

**Mr Caplan:** OK, so effective earlier. The \$4-million fund will be over a three-year period of time, according to your estimates, so this will be \$4 million for each of the next three years. What will happen if the dollars are not claimed or nobody comes forward and makes sufficient application? Where will the dollars go then?

**Hon Mr Clement:** As a government, we're always evaluating our programs, and if the programs are not providing the kind of service that we had intended, if there's a problem with the program, I think we have an obligation on behalf of the taxpayer to always assess our programs, always look for new ways to do things better. If we have a program that is somehow not being part of the solution, then I think we have an obligation—I'll state it quite clearly—to reassess that program and perhaps reallocate those funds to programs that are going to help solve the problem we are seeking to solve.

**Mr Caplan:** Perhaps I can be a little bit more clear in my question. You're going to have \$12 million that you're going to put into this program over the next three years. Let's say, for sake of argument, \$2 million is claimed or application is made to get a PST rebate. What will happen to the \$10 million that you have reserved in this program? Will it go into general revenue? Will it stay in housing for the purpose of providing affordable housing? What will your ministry do?

**Hon Mr Clement:** First of all, it is \$1 million per year, David. It's not \$4 million per year; it's \$1 million per year over the life of the program.

**Mr Caplan:** It's \$1 million per year? That's it, really?

**Hon Mr Clement:** On this particular announcement that you're referring to, yes.

**Mr Caplan:** OK. Great.

**Hon Mr Clement:** You know, the only way this is going to work absolutely perfectly is if the feds come on board in some way as well. I think it is part of the solution. We're not saying it's the entire solution; it's part of the solution, it will help, but we do need to have some relief on the insurance issue for CMHC, and we also need some relief from the GST. There's no question about it. That will make the program more effective. But we're putting our money where our mouth is, and then we're waiting for the federal government to realize the importance of the program.

**Mr Caplan:** I know that's a constant theme, always waiting for either the municipal or federal governments to do something before the province.

**Hon Mr Clement:** You know as well as I do that these programs require coordination. It would be lovely if one ministry or one government with a magic wand could solve the entire issue, but the reality of our lives is that we need the municipalities at the table, we need the federal government at the table, we need individuals at the table as well. So we want to do our part, we want to lead by example, and any assistance that you can provide in these other levels of government would be most appreciated as well.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's unfortunate that our time has run out today.

**Mr Caplan:** Oh, darn. I'm sure I'll have plenty of other opportunities.

**The Vice-Chair:** I know, I know. You will have quite a lot.

**Mr Caplan:** We still have time left.

**The Vice-Chair:** We stand adjourned until Tuesday at 3:30. We've got one more hour of estimates on housing and municipal affairs after routine proceedings on Tuesday. We will stand adjourned until then.

*The committee adjourned at 1750.*









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Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 23 November 1999

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

## Standing committee on estimates

Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing

Ministry of Education  
and Training

## Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 23 November 1999

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1533 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL  
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** Ladies and gentlemen, I call you to order. I want to keep on schedule. Mr Coburn, thank you very much for being so prompt.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** A point of order from the honourable Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** The honourable. Thank you, Chair. That doesn't come very often, especially from you.

I want to get something on the record. I was just advised—I believe it was yesterday—that the committee room has been changed this week and I feel it's inappropriate that the committee room be arbitrarily moved midweek.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's not a point of order, Mr Wettlaufer. I appreciate your opinion on that matter, but it's not a point of order.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's personal privilege then.

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, I've ruled—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It is a point of privilege.

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, I've ruled; it's neither a point of order, nor a point of privilege. The assignment of the room is done on a basis between the chairs and the clerks. We have a different room assignment for tomorrow. We'll come back to this room on Tuesday, if this is the room you're most familiar with. But I've already ruled—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Chair, I would like you to take into consideration the wishes of the committee and at least have a meeting of the subcommittee.

**The Chair:** I am very agreeable to a meeting of the subcommittee, Mr Wettlaufer. We'll contact you for your availability, but for the benefit of the members and the witnesses—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I can make myself available.

**The Chair:**—we are headed for room 151 tomorrow, unless there's some onerous reason why not.

**Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester):** Just to correct the record: At the last session there was a statement made with respect to the housing tribunal. I'd just like to point out to the committee that any concerns or

anything with tribunal decisions or queries of the tribunal should be directed to the chair of the housing tribunal. Similarly, if anything comes to the ministry or the minister, it is redirected then to the chair of the housing tribunal.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Coburn.

We are resuming the estimates for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We come back to the rotation, so we will move to the government party.

**Mr Coburn:** Chair, there are two other pieces of information that members had requested.

**The Chair:** Mr Coburn, what we've done traditionally with that in estimates is that you will have an option to work those in as answers or you can provide them in writing to members of the committee. Normally the time of each of the members of the committee is rationed, so to keep it on track you can work those into your answers or you can provide those and you can note them on the record that they were provided. We'd be very appreciative to have anything you or the ministry would like to provide in writing to all of the committee members. The clerk will be happy to facilitate that.

**Mr Coburn:** OK. We have that information that we'll file with the clerk.

**The Chair:** Tremendous. Can I ask the government party to please proceed. You have 20 minutes.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'd like to inquire about social housing in Ontario. There are many ways of approaching the subject, some effective, some not effective. We know what the NDP did. They injected money into bricks and mortar, not people. Their government spent \$1 million an hour more than it took in, which is why our government inherited such a massive deficit.

But we don't have to just say, "OK, Wayne Wettlaufer is speaking here; he's partisan." I think we should look at what Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff, Phil Dewan, said, and I quote: "More typically, when people discuss the problem of the homeless, it is often immediately presumed that the answer lies in increased production of 'affordable' housing units." "Affordable" he put in quotes.

We all remember just how unaffordable the NDP's non-profit housing program was for Ontario taxpayers. That was in Hansard during the Tenant Protection Act hearings. I don't remember whether it was last summer—not last summer but two or three summers ago.



Housing was supposed to be a top priority for the Liberals. The Liberals' record was just as bad as the NDP's. The Liberal government's inaction was demonstrated in reverse. The Liberals "attempted to appear innovative by announcing several different initiatives with catchy titles," like "assured housing" or "Renterprise," "with little consideration for realistic achievement."

"With time, the Liberal government became famous for its policy announcements, as noted by the Toronto Star:

"Big announcements. It's a housing recipe the Liberal government has been working on for several years. It involves four simple steps: Do something small, announce it loudly, wait and then repeat the process with another small move."

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, I don't want to interrupt and it won't be from your time. I appreciate your efforts to be non-partisan. I just want to remind you that we do have the valuable time of Mr Coburn and you're welcome to address him with your questions—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I have 20 minutes and I believe I can use it any way I see fit, as you Liberals do from time to time.

**The Chair:** You may indeed. I'm just reminding you of the opportunity.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you very much, Chair.

"Since taking office in 1985, the Liberals have been adept at announcing at least 30 different housing initiatives, but their track record speaks for itself.

"They have promised hundreds of thousands of new housing units on various occasions, often throwing out numbers without providing cohesive deadlines. Many of their promises overlap and conflict, creating significant confusion as to what was promised when and for whom. The Liberals seem to have chosen to operate in this manner to avoid having to complete a specific number of units or fulfil specific promises within a set deadline.

"In his official announcement of the assured housing policy on December 15, 1985, former Minister of Housing Alvin Curling promised the delivery of some 345,000 new units between 1985 and 1990 .... In 1986, the government committed to an additional 3,000 non-profit units.

"In the 1987 election campaign," then Premier Peterson "indicated that the Liberals are committed to 102,000 housing units by 1990, which the new housing minister, Chaviva Hošek, has confirmed a commitment to. Since 1987, the Liberals have announced that they would deliver a variety of units, amounting to at least 60,000."

1540

This quote, by the way, is taken from the Fair Rental Policy Organization's newsletter, and at the Fair Rental Policy Organization, as I think you're aware, Mr Chair, Phil Dewan was the president. He's Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff.

He also said:

"While the promises keep coming, the government has produced only a small fraction of its total commitments. The total number of rental units built to date in the three

years the Liberals have been in office is approximately 39,466, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation statistics. This total represents, at best, only a 28% success rate.

"Instead of acting, we see only reactions from the Liberals and knee-jerk announcements, as the government continues to bow to pressure from opposition parties and interest groups."

This is the system our government was forced to inherit, a system that was doomed from the start.

Mr Coburn, I would like to know what our government has done to tackle this very complex issue that was left in such disarray after the last two governments took a shot at it?

**Mr Coburn:** Thank you for the question. You're absolutely right on one point note, the fact that we did inherit quite a mess, but despite that situation, we are moving forward. We're moving forward, we believe, in the right direction. It's comforting to know that even an individual such as Phil Dewan agrees with the direction we're moving in, and he had stated, "Having rightly cancelled the massive non-profit housing programs of their predecessors, the new PC government knows that it must get private investment to produce the rental housing needed in the future."

Of course he was less optimistic about the state of affairs that we inherited: "The provincial Tories can do nothing about the huge capital costs incurred by the Liberals and the NDP with their program, the social non-profit housing. All the province can do is try to reduce the operating costs of these units. And if and when municipalities take over the responsibility for social housing, they will finally have the incentive to reduce operating expenses appropriately and manage more cost-effectively."

Now, that in fact is working. You're going to read some of the inevitable articles and editorials decrying the downloading to the local municipalities, but when you read them I would ask you to stop and think for a minute about where the information is indeed coming from. Because there's examples on where it is successful; for example, in the city of Windsor. How is it that the city of Windsor boasted last January of making an annual profit of about 6% by billing the province for its management services through the Windsor Housing Co, or the city of Toronto, which despite spending freezes managed to find over \$400,000 in the save rent control committee?

This government has actively been seeking and implementing solutions to the social housing situation and the dilemma that we find ourselves in. That is why we have pushed the federal government on a new social housing agreement. It was with great pride—and I can repeat today—that the minister announced last week that the deal has been signed by both levels of government now. This means a great deal to Ontarians.

As promised, the province is committing \$50 million in savings, the results from signing the agreement, to provide assistance to approximately 10,000 low-income families and individuals across the province.

In addition, we have also allocated \$30 million to address capital needs for federal projects being transferred to the municipalities, as well as \$4 million in provincial tax grants, \$2.5 million for people with special needs.

This agreement will allow the province to transfer the administration of social housing to the municipalities, putting a community service where it belongs, in the hands of local government, which better understands the needs of their local communities.

The new agreement will allow the province and the municipalities to streamline the administrative arrangements, simplify programs and serve clients more effectively. It will also provide more flexibility to meet community needs and make better use of the existing services and resources.

This government has been investigating many ways to provide incentives to the private sector to build affordable housing. We realize the incentives are necessary and we recognize the effective means, such as PST rebate. Reduction in taxes is one of the most effective tools to combat high development costs, and even the Liberals know that. Or should I say that their chief of staff knows that? It may filter down over time.

Once more, I would like to quote Mr Dewan. He waded into this issue and offered these comments: "I am referring to property taxes and the unwarranted discrimination against multi-residential tenants, who pay two to four times the tax rate of single family homes and condo dwellers. It is a fact that equalizing property taxes is the single most powerful thing municipalities can do to create affordable housing, by making existing housing cheaper."

In the end, it's about the available resources and how we use them. This government has put forth a great effort to streamline housing delivery. This allows us to serve even more customers with the same dollars. We are getting better value for the \$1.5 billion Ontario taxpayers spend every year on subsidizing social housing.

There has been a lot of discussion in the news over the movement of certain social services, but the province's goal has always been to provide a good service by the appropriate level of government and for the best dollar value. One more time, according to Mr Dewan, some municipalities don't agree with that expenditure of their dollars on social housing and that that was the appropriate level of government to deliver the service.

Just to add a little more emphasis to that, Mr Dewan had stated: "Municipalities have been crying the blues over proposed downloading of certain social services from the province. They were happy to spend the money when it wasn't theirs. Now that they have to put their own money where their mouths are, the tune has changed to one of doom and gloom. Nowhere is the hypocrisy more evident than when it comes to social housing."

We are working with municipalities across all of Ontario, to ensure that the service delivery is efficient, effective and provided by the appropriate level of government. Most municipalities experienced declines in

their local service realignment costs. These declines totalled approximately \$170 million in 1998 alone. Even though 1998 was a year of change, with the province and municipalities each taking on new financial responsibilities, taxes went up in fewer municipalities in 1998 than in the average year between 1985 and 1995.

I think the evidence is starting to come in that this government's plan is working. We're enacting the plan and we are confident the plan will bear considerable fruit as we go down the road. We intend to stay the course and continue working with municipalities and service providers to make this system the best it can be.

1550

**The Chair:** Any further questions from the government party?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair:** You have approximately six and a half minutes.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I want to use some of my time to further raise the question on which you ruled me out of order before. I realize it's not a point of order, but it's some of my time. I want to get on the record that we feel it's inappropriate that the committee room has been arbitrarily changed in mid-week. We feel it's an unusual practice—

**The Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, I'll ask you—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's my time, Chair.

**The Chair:** No, Mr Wettlaufer, your time is not to be used to challenge the decisions of the committee. I have made a ruling on your point.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm not challenging the Chair.

**The Chair:** I would direct you to the important subject—and I'm sure that, by and large, we're here and committed to see the estimates of municipal affairs and housing reviewed. I've already agreed to a subcommittee meeting that would address, hopefully at least, some of your concern, but I have ruled and I cannot allow you to continue in a vein that has already been ruled on by the Chair of this committee.

Mr Wettlaufer, please continue.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** OK, Chair. Mr Coburn, last week, during the course of the committee hearings, I believe it was Mr Caplan who referred to a report—I could be mistaken, Mr Caplan, maybe it wasn't you—indicating the average percentage return that apartment owners were obtaining.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** That was me.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Oh, it was Mr Marchese. Thank you.

Mr Marchese travelled with me during the Tenant Protection Act committee hearings, over two summers. We read into the record at the time—however, it's possible that Mr Marchese may have forgotten—and I certainly would like to read into the record again, the fact that the authors of that report suggested that the numbers of apartment owners surveyed were so small that the report itself was invalid for the purposes it was being used for in the committee hearings. In actual fact, the



return was not 10%; the return was more like, if I recall, 2.5% or 3%, on average.

I would like to give the remaining time to my colleague Mr O'Toole.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's a pleasure to see the parliamentary assistants actually earning their keep.

I've sat through and listened, and I recognize the important initiative of the government with its Tenant Protection Act. The initiative there was to change the conditions so that the private sector would come forward with a solution to the shortage of affordable housing. There was the sincere intention of the minister, Leach at the time—and I know many in the House on all sides were supportive of the intention, that's for sure—to create more affordable housing. I would like to give you a chance, Mr Coburn, to outline the benefits for the tenant and the landlords in the context of the Tenant Protection Act, if you could, for the committee. I think it's important to get it on the record. As we've all talked around the circle of having affordable housing, dealing with the social housing issue, perhaps it will give you enough leverage or opening there to respond to the intended benefits to the tenants and landlords under the Tenant Protection Act.

**Mr Marchese:** I can read the answer for you.

**Mr O'Toole:** No doubt you should read that.

**Mr Coburn:** The Tenant Protection Act: It is a huge challenge to provide a piece of legislation that does try to solve the huge inequities that were put in place before our government came to power. It is a tough piece of legislation that does protect the tenants' rights, and at the same time it balances the needs of both the landlords and the tenants. We have received positive feedback from people, and they have been saying our policies are working.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Who has been saying that?

**Mr Coburn:** And others have agreed, including Mr Dewan, who is formerly of the Fair Rental Policy Organization. Just let me repeat what he had said: "With the proclamation of the Tenant Protection Act on June 17, one could say that a milestone has been achieved on the road to sound housing policy in Ontario." He used the word "milestone" deliberately, he goes on, "because it does mark the end of the NDP era of punitive legislation which had such a negative impact on the preservation of rental housing stock in the province."

In the new legislation, we have maintained rent controls under the Tenant Protection Act, which has been great news for tenants. Under both previous governments, annual allowable rent increase guidelines have been set very high, consuming low-income families' wages. Under both the Liberals and the NDP, annual allowable rent increase guidelines were an average of 4.8%. Actually, the Liberal government went as high as 5.2% and the NDP were even worse at a whopping 6%.

Under the Tenant Protection Act that the Harris government has brought in, it has maintained an average allowable rent increase guideline of 2.8%. More import-

antly, for the year 2000 it was the lowest allowable guideline increase in the history of rent control in Ontario, at 2.6% for the year 2000. That's quite a New Year's resolution, which we intend to keep.

We actually had no choice but to act, it was in such a terrible state. Tenants were in desperate need of legislation that protected them. Again, even Mr Dewan recognized that—

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** What did Mr Caplan say?

**Mr Coburn:** Let me tell you exactly what he said. He once wrote: "Though some Liberal Party literature took this line of attack," meaning that the Tenant Protection Act removed rent controls, "they should have recognized their own vulnerability. In 1986, Liberal legislation in the Residential Rent Regulation Act placed no limit on increases for sitting tenants as a result of capital improvements."

Actually, our friend Mr Dewan had quite a bit to say about the Tenant Protection Act. He was questioned about this, which he declared was absolutely false.

"Repairs and renovations must be bona fide and approved by the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal under the same rules and schedule of amortization as in the Liberal legislation.

"The question to be put to a successful Liberal candidate, for example, Michael Bryant, who spread this line during the campaign, is simple: 'Were you ignorant of the facts or did you purposely distort them?'"

To repeat another quote: "Of course, this whole issue of preserving legal maximum rent is of relevance only because the government has chosen to retain rent controls."

I do hope that over the next couple of days Mr Dewan and Mr McGuinty come to grips with this issue, because Mr McGuinty—

**The Chair:** Time for the government party has expired. We now turn to the opposition party. You have 20 minutes, Mr Caplan.

**Mr Caplan:** Thank you, Mr Chair. I have many questions for the parliamentary assistant, but let me just say that I'm disappointed the minister himself is not here. I know that as late as yesterday afternoon, we were—

**Mr Marchese:** But very ably represented.

**Mr Caplan:** No doubt. My question for the parliamentary assistant is that your ministry has identified that you are going to have the download onto the municipalities in place by January 2000. Is that timetable still in effect?

**Mr Coburn:** No. We are still working with municipalities to provide a smooth transition.

**Mr Caplan:** When will that take place?

**Mr Coburn:** There may be some staff here who may be able to give us some idea.

**Mr Caplan:** The timeline that you identified to municipalities was January 2000. You're telling me that is no longer the case? Is that what you're telling me, that it's no longer the case?

**Mr Coburn:** I'm not telling you that.

**Mr Caplan:** We've got to ask somebody here.

**The Chair:** Will those addressing the committee identify themselves for the purposes of Hansard, please.

**Mr Michael Fenn:** I'm Michael Fenn, deputy minister of the ministry.

**Mr Caplan:** I'll ask the question, Mr Fenn. It had been identified to municipalities and in fact to the House that completion of the transfer to municipalities would be in place by January 2000. My question is, will that happen? And if it won't, when will that take place? When can we expect to see the legislative framework and the legislation which will enable that?

**Mr Fenn:** I think the answer to that has two parts. First of all, the timetable that was originally set out, I believe, for the House was premised on, at least in the area that we're primarily responsible for, the conclusion of a federal-provincial agreement on social housing on a timely basis. Members will be aware that during the course of those negotiations, the federal party withdrew from the negotiations for a considerable period of time and resumed those negotiations again this year. Clearly, that affects our timetable, because we need to work with our municipal partners to effect the transfer.

1600

**Mr Caplan:** I appreciate that. What is the timetable?

**Mr Fenn:** I think the timetable is unchanged in terms of our assumptions about where we would go from the time of the devolution. In the agreement, there is a time frame for reviewing the stock and completing that process and signing off. There's also a process that has to be carried through in terms of the review of the stock by our municipal partners. That timetable is unchanged, but the effective date from which it was initiated is altered by the fact that we had some difficulty concluding an agreement with the federal government.

**Mr Caplan:** So, you had a January 2000 date; you don't have a date now. In your release here on the federal agreement, you said, "The province can introduce the necessary legislation for devolution in the spring for approval by the Legislature." Is that now your timetable?

**Mr Fenn:** Subject to the will of the Legislature always.

**Mr Caplan:** Of course.

**Mr Fenn:** That's our intent.

**Mr Caplan:** That is the timetable, and I appreciate that. As a part of the legislative framework, you will be downloading the responsibility, the management, everything to the municipalities. Is that what's going to happen, that the municipalities will be responsible for everything when it comes to social housing?

**Mr Fenn:** As the member is aware, that's a more complex issue than the question would seem to suggest. Some of the programs require some program review to streamline them and put them in a position so that they can be taken on by our municipal partners in a way that they can administer most efficiently within their own communities. There are elements of the programs, particularly the federal programs, that were not under our jurisdiction before that will take some additional time.

There are elements of the transition that involve labour transition. We have to be fair to our people in terms of the transfer of responsibilities and transfer of the jobs that go along with those responsibilities. So there are various components and elements. With respect to the legislation, my understanding is that the proposal is that the legislation certainly will be introduced on the timetable that was indicated. But whether there would be follow-up pieces of legislation that the Legislature may decide are appropriate, that would be all part of that ongoing plan. It's not a toggle-switch affair; it's a sequential process involving people, money, legal agreements, relationships with providers and so on.

**Mr Caplan:** The parliamentary assistant made it sound as though this was all on course and everything was running quite smoothly. Apparently, that's not the case.

I have a specific question. Perhaps a direct answer could be provided. The risk component of the housing that is currently in place, will that be transferred to municipalities or will the province retain all of the risks associated with housing? Whose responsibility will that be, municipalities or the province? It's a very straightforward question.

**Mr Fenn:** With respect, the way the question was framed, it was very straightforward; the answer, however, reflects the complexity of the issue. The risk associated with some elements of the program will inevitably remain with the province. There needs to be adequate provision for that risk for the taxpayers of Ontario. The primary responsibility for social housing, the ongoing management of the portfolio and the administration of the funding on the existing agreements, will in fact be transferred to municipalities. The plan has not changed. What really has changed was that the timetable was interrupted by the withdrawal of the federal party from the negotiations. Our timetable, as the parliamentary assistant—

**Mr Caplan:** I didn't ask about the timetable; I asked whose responsibility was going to be what.

That takes me to my second question, following that. The parliamentary assistant identified some \$58 million that was transferred from the federal to the provincial government for the provision of risk. The parliamentary assistant referenced in his comments that \$30 million of that risk money, and I take it from the Deputy Minister's comments that, yes, indeed, the municipalities will be responsible, if not for all—and we'll see in the legislation—at least for a part.

More than half of monies that were devoted to the risk, mortgage default or whatever, is now going to be allocated towards capital need. My question to the parliamentary assistant is, why are you taking the municipalities' money? If they're going to assume the risk, why aren't they receiving the money to do that? Why are you spending it on other areas, and is that, in the opinion of the parliamentary assistant, a prudent thing to do?

**Mr Coburn:** Because of the complexity of this, I'll defer that to the deputy minister so that you get the accurate answer.



**Mr Caplan:** We haven't had one yet.

**The Chair:** For the purposes of discussion, we obviously accept the veracity of all answers that are provided in committee. Deputy, please proceed.

**Mr Fenn:** Mr Chairman, I'll endeavour to be more precise in my response. The answer is of course that there are elements of risk that include operating risk. Some of the projects run into difficulty, and that's a class of risk. There's a risk associated with the quality of the stock we were assuming, both the federal stock and the programs we currently administer. There is a capital risk that the parliamentary assistant has indicated is addressed by the proposal to retain \$30 million to deal with that element of the risk.

The answer is that the challenge that faces us is to try to match up the allocation of risk with the allocation of the federal funds and with the transfer of the responsibilities. I guess it will be a matter for the Legislature to determine whether or not we have that right.

**Mr Caplan:** The \$50 million, for that matter, is not found in the estimates book. Can you please direct me to which page I would find that on, say in future years? Because obviously it's not accounted for here, I assume some supplementary estimates will have to be issued. Can you relate the provision of dollars to the current year's estimates book so I can track where those dollars are going next year?

**Mr Fenn:** As the member indicates, it is not in the current estimates because we obviously have to provide for money we know we have as opposed to money prospectively we might anticipate receiving. We knew we were engaged in some negotiations that would continue on through the current fiscal year. So the member's correct: It is not addressed in the book. We will certainly undertake to indicate to members where they can identify that expenditure in future years and it will be part of the business plan.

**Mr Caplan:** Thank you very much. The deputy also mentioned that technical audits have to take place by the municipalities. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the Provincial Auditor highlighted to the ministry that the ministry ought to execute those audits. You haven't done that, so you don't even really know what the entire capital need is.

The region of Peel recently did perform technical audits and did a detailed analysis. I know that ministry staff have asked and requested this information, so I would expect that the deputy or the parliamentary assistant would be able to speak to it. The region of Peel estimates—by the way, the member from Peel is here and would know—that 14,400 people are currently on waiting lists to access affordable housing, social housing, in Peel.

The region of Peel estimates \$1 billion provincially, and in the direct case of Peel, over \$57 million is required to operate and manage its buildings at the same level as it has in the past. This is no addition; this is strictly to keep them where they are, is what is required

from the provincial government. They've done the audit; you haven't.

My question is, is the ministry and is the provincial government going to meet the requirements of the region of Peel and the rest of the province with the capital needs that have been identified?

**Mr Fenn:** I guess the answer to that is that in any kind of process of transfer—certainly we engage in this process in negotiating with the federal government—people open from a negotiating position that reflects a very generous interpretation of what they think their obligations might be. We haven't had an opportunity to work with individual municipalities to talk about the quality of the stock or the provisions for future obligations associated with that. We expect that process to be ongoing.

I think the somewhat ambitious numbers that are being cited by the member that have been prepared by the municipality are perhaps an understandable opening position for the municipality, but the situation we find ourselves in, in terms of reviewing the stock—while it is fair to say that the auditor felt we should be doing more, certainly the work our staff do on an ongoing basis indicates to us that the obligations are considerably less grand than are being proposed.

Notwithstanding that, I think it's fair to say that's one of the reasons the government has decided to set aside an allocation dealing with capital and dealing with some of the provisions that might be implied in the federal transfer. That's one of the reasons we're undertaking an ongoing review through to the end of next March, to ensure that the obligations we're taking on do in fact reflect something that is manageable within the terms of the agreement.

**1610**

**Mr Caplan:** Yes. In fact, \$30 million where a \$1-billion need is identified by somebody who has done a technical audit is quite astounding.

I have one final question and then I will turn it over to my colleague Mr Curling. That relates to a release that went out recently, November 19, from the ministry regarding the provincial homelessness strategy. Part of it says that they're going to allow "municipalities to redirect a portion of the funding they receive for hostel services to preventive programs designed to help people find and keep housing." In the municipal download, where the province used to pay 100% of the cost, the province changed it to an 80-20 sharing arrangement. According to the city of Toronto, because of a cap which has been placed, it is now much closer to a 70-30 sharing arrangement, with property taxpayers in the city of Toronto picking up 30% of the costs. My question for the parliamentary assistant is, why, when we already have a hostel system which is bulging at the seams, are you going to redirect portions of this to other program areas? Then, after this, my colleague will be asking some questions.

**Mr Coburn:** I'm going to defer that question to the deputy, Mr Chair.

**Mr Caplan:** Why is the parliamentary assistant here?

**Mr Fenn:** I think there are two elements to that response. First, with the indulgence of the committee, I think committee members will be aware that the responsibility for that program, the funding for that program falls under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the amount that's allowed for people in shelters on a per capita basis has been a matter of some considerable debate among municipal providers. The member is correct about that, but we're really not in a position to respond to the appropriateness of that number.

The related programs that we have considered are some of the programs involving finding accommodation for people who have particular challenges in finding accommodation. Those programs are often run by local agents on behalf of municipalities. They've been quite successful and we have provided the funding that's necessary as part of that strategy to continue that good work in housing help centres and things of that kind.

**Mr Curling:** Mr Coburn, I just wanted to say that coming into this thing so new, I think you've handled yourself very well. Actually you have a quite capable ministry staff there who will assist you, and I know of their ability. So with that, I'm just going to ask the ministry overall, yourself or any other deputy, if they could respond to any of the situations that your government has done, the fact of cutting welfare support and what impact this has with housing, cutting the support to those who are on welfare, to the cancellation of rent control, increased tuition fees, forcing individuals who are on welfare to work without giving the adequate support of daycare and making that great impact that makes it more difficult for individuals.

Is there any study or do you have anything in the ministry that would indicate what pressure this has borne on people who are seeking access to affordable housing and if this has in any way increased the homelessness that we see so evident in many of the cities across Ontario?

**Mr Coburn:** Thank you for the question. I'll attempt to give my answer, and if there's other information, then maybe some members of our very capable staff will be able to assist me.

Overall, the programs that we've initiated have tried to address the problem of housing, and I think some of the programs we have implemented are headed in the right direction. We have, for example, as I had mentioned in my earlier comments, the rent guidelines for this year at 2.6%. That's the lowest it's ever been in terms of tenants. That is a big improvement in a short period of time over what we had in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

Our goal in this government was to provide jobs, for people to go out and find gainful employment and create a climate where there's more employment, and we've done that. The numbers are pointing towards that.

**Mr Curling:** I hate to interrupt you in all this, but I have a very short time. In the limited time I've got, I just want to find out, with all of these cuts, with all these policies the government has put in place, what pressures

have come to bear on those people? Have you seen evidence that it has caused hardship on these people? Have all these cuts improved their well-being, the cut to welfare, the fees and all that? I'm just wondering if the ministry has any figures or any study to say that doing all this has really improved the lot of the people who are seeking affordable housing, or has it caused it to be worse? I don't know. I just wonder if the ministry has done any study on this.

**Mr Coburn:** I'm not aware of anything—and if there is a study, then please come forward—but I think the evidence is there that we're putting more money back into the pockets of Ontarians. I haven't seen any evidence that—in fact, I've seen evidence that it's working to improve the situation.

**Mr Curling:** Let me ask a specific question. Have the waiting lists for affordable housing decreased or increased? Also, has the time to get access to affordable housing or to Ontario Housing increased or decreased?

**Mr Coburn:** Just bear with me. I'll just go over what we've committed, Mr Curling.

**The Chair:** Mr Coburn, I wonder if I could ask you to be as succinct as you can. There's about 30 seconds or so remaining in this segment of the discussion.

**Mr Coburn:** We recognize the need that is out there, and as a result of recognizing that, we've put more than \$100 million of commitments to the provincial homelessness strategy: \$50 million for rent supplement units for low-income—

**Mr Caplan:** It's all federal money.

**Mr Coburn:** —\$45 million to develop housing. That's to the credit of all three parties, municipal, provincial and feds, that we're trying to sort this out so that there are savings so that we can put more money into the housing initiative. There's \$10 million annually for a provincial homelessness initiatives fund, an increase of \$6 million over the previous level; \$2 million to increase the community start-up benefit to help families establish permanent residences; \$2.5 million to house up to 400 people with special needs; \$1 million to divert ex-offenders from the hostel system.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Coburn.

**Mr Coburn:** Quite clearly, the job is not done; it's constant. It's not like you flip the switch and say it's—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Coburn. Your job is not done yet today, and perhaps you'll get a chance to elaborate more on that point when Mr Marchese directs questions your way. Mr Marchese, you have 20 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Coburn, I've got a few questions for you. We won't need the deputy for some of these questions.

You and some of your members—Mr O'Toole and others; Wettlaufer as well—have been repeating that rental buildings pay four times more than condominiums, so there's a big differential. We agree with that. It's a big problem.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** In property taxes.

**Mr Marchese:** Property taxes.

**Mr Coburn:** Yes, property taxes.



**Mr Marchese:** You were very magnanimous. You gave the power to municipalities fix that. Do you think it's easy?

**Mr Coburn:** Actually if it was easy, everybody would be doing it. No, nothing's easy. It's always a constant challenge to try and improve the lot for our residents and our taxpayers.

**Mr Marchese:** I find some of your folks very arrogant in terms of how they say that: "We've given them the power to do that." It's really unfair to these poor tenants. They now have the power to fix that problem. You folks are saying: "You should go after those city politicians. They should fix it." Is it true to say that you people say that?

**Mr Coburn:** I think what we've done is work in partnership with municipalities, which are closest to the residents in our community, to try and resolve some of these challenges that are in front of us.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, I understand. If the city of Toronto, as one example of a city that would like to do that, does do that, is it fair to assume that they would have to make up that difference somehow? If they equalize taxes, is it fair to say that there is a loss of income for the city?

**Mr Coburn:** Not necessarily. Through improved efficiencies, the goal of our government has been to reduce taxes and do things more efficiently. That same logic falls into the municipal—

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**Mr Marchese:** Oh no, you guys are great. We can't match your skill. That's quite obvious. I understand that.

But I've asked you a specific question. If they equalize that differential at the city level, what I heard you just say is that they could find savings somewhere. Is that correct, more or less? Yes?

**Mr Coburn:** What we're asking, to repeat one more time, is that all levels of government, and the municipalities are partners, review their operations to find things more efficient. In this whole housing program, there are indications that there are savings. We've shown that over the last few years.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course you've shown that. We'll try to get to that if we can.

I'm suggesting to you, because you're either not answering or unwilling to answer or you don't know the answer, that it's a serious problem to equalize that differential. I'm suggesting to you that I'm not sure even the deputy would know what loss it would be to the city if they equalized that differential. If they bring down the rate of rental buildings to the rate where condominiums are, it would be—probably incalculable but some people might have done their homework—a huge economic loss to the city. Maybe the deputy can answer, I'm not sure. Do you have an answer?

**Mr Fenn:** I would make the observation that the important part of that whole enterprise is to make a start. Certainly, to use the example the member mentioned, the city of Toronto, it is true, as the member indicated, that it's a bit of a zero-sum game, that there is a rebalancing,

but as the parliamentary assistant indicated, municipalities have had some considerable success. In part, because of our reducing the costs of the local services realignment costs year over year, they have additional revenues that are available and that can be used to equalize.

If I might, there is one other observation I would make, which is that the city of Toronto, for example, has made a start in this area. The new housing stock in the rental area that they are promoting—

**The Chair:** I don't want to interrupt Mr Marchese's line of questioning, but I'm not sure if that was directly responsive.

**Mr Marchese:** I was looking for a political answer. I'm surprised the deputy is willing to help out in that way. It's interesting. I don't think you know.

Mr Deputy, I disagree with you very strongly. It's interesting that you raise these political matters, saying that these people have got a lot of money or that they've been given an equal amount of money as a result of taking education away and the downloading of responsibilities. I'm going to get to that. They're profoundly short. I am interested in your opinion, but not right now. As much as I'm interested, I'm surprised. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised at the deputy.

Parliamentary assistant, if they equalize, they have a serious problem. They have to make up that shortage somehow. They have to get it from somewhere else. You either pass it on to business or to the homeowner. Those are the only two options you've got, unless you two folks have another magical option about finding some savings somewhere else. They aren't any other savings. To make up for that difference, they have to go to the business sector or the homeowner. They're the only two that I can see.

Would you recommend to the city that they pass that on, shift that property tax base to the business sector or the homeowner sector to be able to reduce the apartment tenant's property tax load?

**Mr Coburn:** I guess that's where we have a fundamental disagreement on how the problem is addressed. Certainly at the provincial level we couldn't continue to throw money at the problem. It was totally unaffordable. We had to find more efficient ways to provide service.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not talking about that right now.

**Mr Coburn:** Just let me finish.

**Mr Marchese:** That's got nothing to do with what I'm raising with you. I'm saying you have empowered the city to be able to deal with the inequality that exists in terms of property taxes between the rental buildings and the condominiums. There's a differential and you have, through law, permitted the city now to correct that. That's all I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the other, which I will get to as soon as we finish this.

**Mr Coburn:** Unfortunately it's not quite that simple. When we did the transfer of responsibilities, there was \$570-odd million left in tax room for municipalities to work towards these problems. There is all kinds of evidence on how we are achieving more efficient and

effective ways of delivering service. That is the challenge to all of us at all levels of government, to find more efficient ways to deal with some of these problems. We simply can't continue to pay, pay, pay.

**Mr Marchese:** No. I'll make the statement, because you can't answer the question.

They can't pass on this problem by fixing that problem that you have given them the power to fix. They cannot fix it by passing on the property tax burden to homeowners, who feel overburdened already. That's why Mel Lastman, your buddy, who usually is a conservative individual, said, "No property tax increases."

Because there are no property tax increases, he can't pass this problem on to the property tax payer, not for this election at least; maybe for the next one. So at the moment he's in a box. The other box he's in, however, speaking to the fact that you and your ministry have given them all these wonderful millions of dollars, is that these people are in debt beyond their ability to deal with it. They want to sell off Toronto Hydro, as a suggestion, in order to deal with the debt.

You folks have given them \$250 million, as a loan, to deal with some of their problems, and even with this, they're in a serious financial problem. They won't pay back your loan because they don't have the money to pay you back. There is no money to pay you back. That loan only makes up for the losses they have incurred as a result of your transference of those responsibilities to them. I don't know if you realize the tremendous burden that has put on this city of Toronto in terms of general services.

People are complaining that roads are not being fixed. People are complaining that garbage is a problem in Toronto. The people are not picking up litter in the city of Toronto. It just didn't happen because they don't want to. They've got a financial problem. They don't know what to do.

I'm sure through your Tory plan, because you guys are so efficient, that you would have been able to deal with it much faster than they. Obviously there's so much fat in the city of Toronto, they could probably continue to cut some more. But I'm sure you've got some good suggestions for them in terms of the sensibility to deal with that.

Let me get to another political question: shelter allowances. In 1990, your government had a plan to bring in shelter allowances. It was a promise, in fact; it was part of the Common Sense Revolution. Do you have a sense of where that issue is at?

**Mr Coburn:** We are working towards that \$50 million for rent supplement for low-income people. To repeat it one more time, government is not good in the bricks-and-mortar business. We really believe that the development community is better able to achieve the efficiencies to provide the housing that our residents require, and that is part of the plan that we are implementing. Therefore, by reducing costs, reducing taxes, providing some incentives to develop a much better

climate for the developers to build these units, to get a return on investment, we believe that is the answer.

**Mr Marchese:** In terms of the shelter allowance, it's 50 million bucks that's coming from the deal that you guys negotiated with the feds, basically, is that it?

**Mr Coburn:** That was part of the overall agreement. That is correct.

**Mr Marchese:** Is there more to come through a shelter allowance kind of strategy?

**Mr Coburn:** There's a portion of that which will go to shelter allowance this year.

**Mr Marchese:** So that was the promise you guys made in 1990, and this is how you're dealing with it, more or less?

**Mr Coburn:** No. Actually, our overall commitment is to create a better climate for all Ontarians. I mean, the goal at the end of the day is that everybody has a place to live. That's the ultimate goal, isn't it?

**Mr Marchese:** In terms of the point you made about governments not being good at bricks and mortar, you and the minister have repeated this many times, not to my surprise, although I've got to tell you I get so tired of the repetition, and Mr Wettlaufer raised this and Mr O'Toole raised this. Would you guys say that you introduced the Rental Housing Protection Act to help the private sector get involved?

**Mr Coburn:** Yes, there's a portion in there addressed to that.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you know a reason why they're not getting involved now?

**Mr Coburn:** They are. There are indications that the climate is becoming more—lends itself to that type of development. It seems to me that the member seems to think this is a problem that can be fixed just with a snap of your fingers.

**Mr Marchese:** It will come with time, I suppose.

**Mr Coburn:** It would be nice if we had more of that money; then we could do that.

**Mr Marchese:** But they will be involved, you say, at some point, because you've helped to create a better climate somehow.

**Mr Coburn:** Yes. We have worked towards creating a better climate through incentives to the development community to build these units.

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**Mr Marchese:** We don't see that. We don't see that any of the efforts you have made have gotten the private sector in. If they haven't gotten involved in construction of housing now, they won't be able to do it in the next couple of years, I guarantee it, unless you are able to do something different.

Mr Coburn, last week I asked your minister—the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp said that we will need 80,000 units by 2001 and that we will have created only 6,000 units by 2001. Do you think it's a problem?

**Mr Coburn:** Certainly we take that very seriously. We've implemented some of these plans that we believe will lead to very productive co-operation between the development community and the need we're trying to



address. But it also takes the co-operation of all levels of government.

**Mr Marchese:** I quite agree.

**Mr Coburn:** There's an issue right across this country with respect to this.

**Mr Marchese:** I agree with you. Have you set up something to talk to the federal Liberal government about how you could do this together?

**Mr Coburn:** I have not. I would have to ask that question of the minister.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you think the deputy knows?

**Mr Fenn:** Certainly the minister and the federal minister spoke on the occasion of the signing of the social housing agreement. There was a reference to the Lampert study and the Toronto Star article about the Lampert study. It has been a fairly consistent position of the government that the gap that stands in the way of significant investment in rental housing is in large part to do with the unfair treatment of GST and CMHC insurance premiums and insurance policies that adversely affect the attractiveness of investment in affordable housing.

I think it's quite clear that our minister has been advocating with his federal colleague on the need to look at those kinds of obstacles that stand in the way of investment in affordable rental housing.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes. Lampert identified those three and about eight or nine other things in terms of what you and other levels of government needed to do to get the private sector in. I suspect even with all the land it might not be enough.

So there are no meetings you're aware of in terms of your minister actually sitting down or calling the federal minister to say: "We've got a problem here; we've got to solve it somehow."

**Mr Coburn:** I wouldn't take my comment so lightly. I don't know whether any meetings are happening next week or the next week.

**Mr Marchese:** Don't you think there should be?

**Mr Coburn:** Certainly. There's ongoing dialogue and discussion on a problem like this. It is serious, and we do take it very seriously, and there are ongoing discussions between our government and the federal government on how we can come up with solutions between the two so that we can address the problem in a more effective manner.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. So you're agreeing with me that perhaps the minister should make a call to the federal minister and sit down and talk specifically about what strategy we need to put in place to get the construction going.

**Mr Coburn:** I think this is just not something that the Minister of Housing is—

**Mr Marchese:** Sure it is.

**Mr Coburn:** Not entirely. There's the Minister of Finance. There are other ministries involved in this as well. Certainly there's financial impact involved in this. That's the challenge in how we're going to address this problem: the financial capability to deal with it.

**Mr Marchese:** I was the minister of culture for a period of time. I never had to go and ask Rae or Floyd Laughren if I could meet with my minister of culture because there might have been some financial issues involved. It didn't prevent me from meeting with my federal counterpart. Surely you would agree with that.

**Mr Coburn:** I'm surprised at the interpretation of my response. I didn't say there was a problem with the meeting; I just said it took more than the one party. If you're going to sit down and have a meeting, you'd like to have all the players there, and I'm sure they've got other initiatives that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** For sure, yes. Mr Spina, I couldn't quite understand your reaction. Are you indicating that perhaps—

**Mr Coburn:** I speak with an Ottawa Valley accent. Maybe that's why the member is having difficulty.

**Mr Marchese:** I beg your pardon?

**Mr Coburn:** I'm from the Ottawa Valley. Maybe you don't understand my dialect or something. I don't know.

**Mr Marchese:** No, it's got nothing to do with the misunderstanding of the dialect. I just think if the Minister of Housing believes this is a serious matter, he should sit down with the minister at the federal level.

If you think we need to get Mr Ernie Eves, the finance minister, to sit down, that would be a good idea, Mr Spina. That's a good idea maybe. Maybe we should get both of these guys together and say, "Let's go to the federal counterparts and sit down and discuss the strategy." I was just trying to understand why you were laughing before, as a way of understanding how to deal with that.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I'm not in order.

**Mr Marchese:** Maybe we could get Mr Ernie Eves as part of this discussion, do you think?

**Mr Coburn:** I think we are looking at all avenues on how to pursue this and resolve it with our partners.

**Mr Marchese:** Your avenue is to leave this to the private sector. That's your avenue. I am telling you that I don't see any effort whatsoever at the moment by the private sector or by your government that is going to get us dealing with the problem of shortage of housing. The reason I pointed out CHMC is a way of saying to you that we have a crisis, that there's a housing shortage. If I simply say that, without using that as an authority, you might dismiss it as simply an opinion.

I'm saying we've got a problem, backed up by that study done by CMHC, and I am not seeing any effort by your ministry, your minister or this government to deal with it, other than the fact that you say, "We recognize it's a problem, and we're doing something." I don't know what that something is.

**The Chair:** One minute, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Coburn:** I can go over some of the incentives again that we talked about that the member may have not taken note of.

**Mr Marchese:** Please help me. Yes, I must have missed them.

**Mr Coburn:** It takes partnership from all levels of government, again. The federal government has a role to play in this, a very serious and large role, in terms of housing requirements across this country, not just in Ontario. I guess you have to question sometimes the resolve at the senior level of government in this country when you've got CMHC doubling the insurance rates on some of their housing.

I don't disagree with the member. It is a huge challenge. But it takes the meeting of all minds, and it can't just rest on one doorstep. We have taken initiatives with this government to try to address the problem within our purview, and that is just a start. You threw out a guarantee a while ago, and I am quite confident that you'll see a marked improvement in terms of the housing stock as we head into the next construction season.

**The Chair:** Maybe we'll conclude on that. Mr Coburn, thank you.

It's now time to consider the estimates of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Thank you, Mr Marchese. I will put to you the questions.

Shall vote 1901 carry?

All in favour, please say "aye." Raise your hands.

All opposed, please say "nay."

I declare the vote carried.

Shall vote 1902 carry?

Just indicate with your hands, please. All those in favour, please raise your hands.

All those opposed?

The vote is carried.

Shall vote 1903 carry?

Those opposed?

Vote 1904?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Carried.

**The Chair:** Shall we combine the votes?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Please.

**The Chair:** Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing carry?

All those in favour, please signify.

All those opposed?

We'll just note that 1904 through 1906 were all in favour.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to the House? OK. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr Coburn. Thank you, Deputy.

We now resume with the Ministry of Education immediately after.

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## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** Maybe we should start the estimates for both the ministries of education and of training, colleges and universities. It's a great opportunity to have two ministers in one now. I

understand there is an agreement to split it at 15 minutes each. In a very democratic way we've agreed that Minister Ecker will go first and Minister Cunningham will go after, 15 minutes each, and then there's a response. We will start with the Minister of Education.

**Mr Marchese:** Who's got seniority?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** You don't want to know the answer to that question.

To members of the estimates committee, I appreciate the opportunity to give a brief overview of some of our education reforms.

I've spent the last few months since my appointment listening and working with educators, administrators, parents, students in order to move forward with our very important changes. I must say, the learning curve has been very steep, but we are carrying forth the work of the ministry actively and, dare I say, energetically.

I want to begin by saying that I am very proud of our public education system and what it's accomplishing. Our schools provide children with rigorous province-wide standards of education. Our education system offers stable education funding, better career planning and stronger links with the job market.

Nonetheless, a top-quality education system requires a continuous investment of human and financial resources. We must look constantly for ways to do things better and remember that we have the obligation to provide a meaningful and relevant education to students who are growing up in a rapidly changing world.

Our vision is to ensure that Ontarians receive the best education in Canada. We are taking bold steps on many fronts to ensure that students from kindergarten through to the end of high school receive top-quality education. We are committed to providing students with a safe environment characterized by the highest standards, clear expectations and frequent straightforward evaluation.

The Ontario government is deeply committed to the principles of responsibility and accountability. Accordingly, a good place to start would be to briefly review the responsibilities of the ministry.

We established the framework for education in the elementary and high school systems. We developed curriculum policy, determined provincial standards for student achievement, set high school diploma requirements, evaluated and improved learning materials for use in the schools, distributed funds equitably to school boards so they can operate schools, offered distance learning courses through our independent learning centres, made regulations that govern the school year, school calendar, set the organization of schools and school boards and defined the duties of teachers and school board officials.

We operate provincial schools for students who are deaf, blind or deaf-blind. We list private schools and inspect private secondary schools to ensure that they are meeting the standards of instruction.

Overall our elementary and secondary education program aims to achieve three important outcomes: excellence in student achievement; preparation of all students



for success in further education, work and community life; and the improvement of Ontarians' ability to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

Earlier this year the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board released a major report, *A Roadmap to Prosperity*. Among other things the report noted:

"A highly skilled, well-educated workforce is currently one of Ontario's key economic advantages and will be even more crucial in the future. The knowledge and skills Ontarians bring to their work can help create the strong and diversified economy we have today. The challenge for the new millennium is to enhance our ability and confidence to adapt to a changing work environment and maximize our opportunities as individuals and as a province."

For this ministry, it means meeting the current educational needs of students and at the same time anticipating what they will need in order to realize their full potential in the rapidly changing world of tomorrow, a world that we know will be a wired world of instant information, e-mails, the Internet, new technologies. We know that our economy in this country will be more technology based, more knowledge dependent. We expect that work and employment patterns will keep changing and that today's students will be graduating into jobs that don't even exist today.

How do we make sure that public education helps prepare students for that tomorrow? We start with four key building blocks.

The first consists of excellent teachers, backed by resources focused in the classroom. Teachers indeed are the backbone of the system. We rely on them to motivate students, to excite them intellectually, to encourage their curiosity, creativity and critical thinking.

We all know and appreciate what a profound difference a good teacher can make in the life of a young person. Good teaching requires many skills and much knowledge, but most important is the ability to reach out to young people and awaken them to the world in which we live.

I have great respect for the commitment and dedication of our teachers. We support them in many ways, including professional resources, ongoing school-based teacher training, summer institutes. We want to ensure that our teachers are the best qualified and most highly skilled in the country.

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That is why our government intends to also develop a teacher testing program, in consultation with teachers and other stakeholders in the education system. We will consult broadly on this point and look for best practices in other jurisdictions and in other professions to ensure that we can get it right and achieve our goals.

I know to some teacher testing may sound threatening, but that is certainly not the intent. We want to ensure that teachers stay as up to date as possible so they can meet the challenging needs of our young people. Remaining on the cutting edge of one's profession is not a challenge that is unique to teaching. Many professionals have to

upgrade their skills over the course of their careers. Paying close attention to ongoing professional development is a question of quality assurance and accountability.

The second building block in making our education system the best it can be consists of forging productive relationships with all of the stakeholders. This includes teachers, of course, as well as students, parents and taxpayers. There will always be different points of view about how to build a quality education system, but as long as we keep the lines of communication open, these differences can be healthy. As minister, I am committed to working with these groups to indeed achieve our goals.

One example I'd like to raise with you is that it's widely acknowledged that there is a need to find more employers interested and willing to give students meaningful work experiences before they leave school in order to assist them in making the transition from school to work. Some of Ontario's top business and community leaders have joined forces with the ministry to make advances in this area.

Earlier this month, my colleague Dianne Cunningham and I announced that the province has launched a new campaign to encourage employers to do this. Known as the *Passport to Prosperity*, this initiative is helping school boards offer interested students the opportunity to learn through hands-on training or experience. This initiative builds on the work we began last April with the Provincial Partnership Council. Their aim is to recruit employers to create more school-to-work opportunities. Members include employers from across the province and CEOs from the private and public sectors. The new council is committed to working with schools and community organizations so that students will gain this valuable experience. The newly formed Ontario Learning Partnership Group—local industry councils and training boards—will support the work of the council.

The third building block is the investment that we make in the system. We want our education system to help children develop the skills and motivation to think, to learn, to adapt and to grow, and we want to equip our young people with the skills they need to do this. We know that a high-quality public education system is one of the most important social investments that any government can make.

Some of the concrete examples of how we're investing in the system include education funding that is increased by more than \$100 million this fiscal year. In this school year also we will spend at least \$1.2 billion on special education. That amounts to \$32.5 million more than in the previous year and more than ever before in the history of this province.

Last year, we provided school boards with dedicated full funding for half-day junior kindergarten and this year 69 of 72 boards offer JK. We provide funding to the remaining boards for alternative early learning programs.

We had a special, one-time, top-up investment of \$100 million to buy new textbooks for elementary school students. We will provide an additional \$30 million this

year for grade 9 books and another \$30 million next year for grade 10 textbooks.

To support students and teachers in making the transition to a new four-year high school system, we will provide a total of \$150 million this year and next for textbooks, teacher training, professional resources and extra support for students.

Funding for new schools will grow to \$188 million this school year. This funding will support the construction of new school facilities, and we are making significant investments in classroom construction. Sixty-one new schools or additions to existing schools will open just in this school year alone.

We've allocated \$50 million of the SuperBuild Growth Fund to help school boards manage pressing capital needs related to health and safety.

I've been describing the building blocks of a good education system, and the fourth, and final, block has to do with accountability. It applies to students, teachers, trustees, school board officials, as well as the government itself. Each of us must be responsible for our actions and open to public scrutiny.

To improve public accountability in our system, we've taken a number of steps: We've reduced the number of boards from 129 to 72, thus cutting down on bureaucracy; reduced the number of school board politicians by two thirds; limited trustee allowances, and we began the process of focusing education dollars directly on students and teachers in the classroom.

The old system of funding involved 34 different types of grants and formulas and allocations. It was overly complex, obscure to parents and taxpayers, and quite frankly it did not work as well as it should. We brought in a new student focus funding system that is simpler and fairer. Now each school board receives the same base level of per pupil funding. Parents and taxpayers can clearly see how boards are spending those dollars. Funding is based on enrolment and the needs of students, not on the tax base of the local community.

We also included a \$1.2-billion class-size protection fund to limit average class sizes on a board-wide basis to 22 students at the secondary level and 25 at the elementary level. As a result, average class size has declined. Only a handful of boards exceeded the average last year and we don't expect any to be above the standard this year. School boards will have to report on how they've used the money we've provided, and these financial report cards will be published for the first time next year.

But there are other aspects of a high-quality education system which we are moving forward on. More than a year ago, we asked Dr Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain to advise us on how to prepare Ontario's young people for success in school, at work and in life in general. The Premier released their report this spring and the study confirms that brain development in the first six years of a child's life sets the foundation for future learning behaviour and health. The study presents a long-term strategy for improving outcomes for

our children and reminds us that all sectors of society have a role to play in supporting early childhood development.

We've responded in a number of ways to these recommendations: by fully funding half-day JK, as I indicated; by creating community-based demonstration projects to evaluate different approaches to early learning; by setting up an early years task group which will develop a framework for community-based early childhood development and parenting programs. Once the framework is established, we will have an early years challenge fund to match dollar for dollar private and voluntary sector contributions to the early years programs.

Our commitment to increasing the quality of education in schools begins with our youngest children and continues through elementary and high school. We've developed and begun implementing a new curriculum for elementary students. The new curriculum sets out clear expectations of what children should learn. It establishes new grade-by-grade standards in all subjects and sets higher academic standards and expectations. It's brought the first wholesale change in the elementary science program in 30 years and for the first time elementary students are studying technology in every grade.

This fall, we began phasing in our new high school program and curriculum for students entering grade 9. The program has a stronger emphasis on math, language, sciences, and more focus on co-operative education and school-to-work programs.

Finally, to carry through on our commitment to greater accountability we've introduced standard province-wide tests in math and language in grades 3 and 6, and this will be expanding. The testing, I should note, doesn't replace teacher evaluation, but measures achievement and helps us compare ourselves to each other and to other jurisdictions.

We've also introduced a standard elementary school report card with clear, concise information about each student's progress. This year, we are extending this initiative to secondary schools, starting with grade 9.

We've made many strides in reforming Ontario's education system in the past four years, but more needs to be done. The Premier announced earlier this year the creation of a Charter of Education Rights and Responsibilities to clearly identify what students, teachers and parents need to do to produce excellence in education.

As well, teachers can't teach and students can't learn unless schools guarantee a safe, secure and respectful environment. To achieve this, we've proposed several initiatives. For example, we plan to introduce a province-wide code of conduct for students that would make expulsion automatic for students who bring weapons to school, provide drugs or alcohol to others or who commit criminal assault.

1700

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, we are just about running out of time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, and I'm just about finished, Mr Chair. The timing's not bad.



I'd like to end with one quote from our throne speech:

"The foundation of a better Ontario and a brighter future for our children is an education system that strives for excellence. In addition to learning new concepts and skills, Ontario's young people also must understand the responsibilities of citizenship, and be able to distinguish right from wrong. Your government will continue to improve Ontario's education system by raising standards, investing in children and promoting principles of respect and responsibility."

Thank you very much for your indulgence.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

Minister Cunningham.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you today about the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, the former Ministry of Education and Training was divided in June of this year and out of that division emerged the new Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Since the ministry is new, it would be helpful to begin by giving a brief overview of our mandate: to strive to help create and to continuously invest in a post-secondary education and training system of the highest possible quality. We want to ensure that Ontarians in every part of the province continue to have access to the highest-quality education and training and we're committed to giving parents, students, educators, trainers and taxpayers accurate information about how well the system is working.

Allow me to summarize the ministry's key responsibilities. We have two main areas of interest: training and post-secondary education.

In the area of training, the ministry is responsible for developing policy directions for adult education and labour market training; managing and funding provincial programs to support workplace training and workplace preparation, including apprenticeship, career and employment preparation and adult literacy and basic skills; the Ontario summer jobs program; managing provincial relations with the federal government concerning training programs; setting standards and providing certification for occupational training, particularly for trades under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, as well as for the soon-to-be-proclaimed new legislation, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act; and undertaking labour market research and planning.

In the area of post-secondary education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is responsible for developing policy direction for universities and colleges of applied arts and technology; planning and administering policies related to basic and applied research in this sector; developing policies related to the granting of degrees; distributing funds allocated by the provincial Legislature to colleges and universities; providing financial assistance programs for post-secondary students; and registering private vocational schools.

Earlier this year the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board released a special report entitled *A Road Map to Prosperity: An Economic Plan for Jobs in the 21st Century*, which my colleague referred to. On one hand, the report acknowledged what we all know: that a highly skilled, well-educated workforce is one of Ontario's key economic advantages. On the other hand, the report articulated challenges that we have an obligation to tackle. Allow me to quote a few lines from the report:

"Employers report skill shortages in a number of sectors, notably information technologies and the automotive industry. As well, adult literacy in Ontario is only in the middle of the pack internationally."

The report went on to note that Ontario employers spend less than their international counterparts on formal employee training. Furthermore, it said that one in four Ontarians between the ages of 15 and 24 have never worked. The report also pointed out that colleges and universities face the added challenge of serving an increased number of students expected to seek admission in the year 2003.

The bottom line is quite simple: We have a first-rate system of colleges and universities and our skilled trades people are highly trained, although we have significant challenges in meeting the need across many sectors. The challenge we have together is to ensure that our systems of training, colleges and universities serve students, the market and our economy even more efficiently in the years to come.

I'd like to describe to you initiatives recently or currently underway in the ministry in training. Let me begin with some of the good news.

Earlier this fall the Ontario government announced that our 1999 Ontario summer jobs program had succeeded beyond all expectations and surpassed the 1998 results. I'm proud that my ministry had the lead government role in coordinating this successful initiative. This year, 61,225 students, the most ever, aged 15 and up received assistance to find work or create their own summer jobs. The Ontario summer jobs campaign is a \$50.8-million investment that combines programs offered by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Management Board Secretariat; the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ontario summer jobs is just one of a number of programs aimed at helping Ontarians find jobs and get training that leads to satisfying jobs.

The government's Job Connect program spent \$102 million last year to help 102,000 unemployed people, primarily young people no longer attending school, to find jobs, return to school or gain further training. Job Connect is the largest part of the government's \$200-million Ontario Youth Opportunities initiative, which includes programs in various ministries.

Last year the Legislature passed the new Apprenticeship and Certification Act, the first comprehensive overhaul of our apprenticeship system since the 1960s. It

also happens to be the cornerstone of the government's strategy to streamline and strengthen apprenticeship training. We intend to increase the number of new apprentices entering the system to 19,000 annually from 11,000. When proclaimed, the act will help create a flexible, accountable training system; a strong role for industry, including the recognition that it must drive the training system; greater quality of training and worker mobility; better training standards; and more training opportunities, including expansion into new occupations and trades.

Finally, I should note that the government respects and upholds the established role of apprenticeship training in the construction industry. We have decided that the trades formerly governed by the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act will continue to be governed by that act unless the trade decides otherwise. The ministry will also work with industry committees to clarify the roles that government, the private sector and individual trainers will play in the apprenticeship system.

The ministry will continue to negotiate a fair labour market development agreement with the federal government to achieve a seamless, coordinated, made-in-Ontario employment and training system. Once negotiated, the labour market development agreement will include basic skills upgrading; on-the-job training, including more apprenticeship opportunities; strategic skills; summer jobs for youth; and continued assistance to help students create their own summer jobs.

The federal government has signed a labour market development agreement with every province but Ontario. The Ontario government wants an agreement that will allow this province to create a high-quality set of training and employment programs with a fair share of federally controlled funding from employment insurance premiums. Ottawa has offered 28% of funding for labour market programs. However, Ontarians account for almost 40% of the Canadian labour force and one third of the people unemployed in Canada. As well, Ontarians contribute more than 40% of the country's EI premiums. My question would be, why should the unemployed in Ontario have less access to training opportunities than the unemployed in other provinces? This is a question we've been asking for far too long.

Why would the federal government be satisfied with overlap and duplication of programs that in many instances compete for clients in our own communities who are counting on training programs that are effective and that allow them to re-enter the world of work? The system is inefficient and fractured. Governments should work together. The people want us to do so.

We are working with community colleges to provide alternate delivery formats for classroom training that will meet the needs of our unemployed in isolated communities. For example, Durham College provides training for electricians via the Internet.

We're also working to encourage more women to enter the skilled trades. Over the next three years the ministry will work with the Ontario Women's Directorate

to encourage up to 700 women to become apprentices and skilled tradespeople in the automotive industry. The ministry will also work with more than 300 agencies to put in place the renewed literacy and basic skills program to deliver literacy training to more than 55,000 Ontarians this year and many more next year.

Post-secondary education: In the field of post-secondary education, Ontario has one of the world's finest systems of universities and colleges of applied arts and technology. Colleges and universities play a major role in our economic well-being and we take this issue very seriously. Last year, provincial spending on post-secondary education, including operating and capital grants, student support programs and tax credits for students and educational institutions, totalled some \$3.5 billion, and this year that figure will grow to more than \$4 billion.

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As the baby boomers' children age, enrolment will increase at post-secondary institutions. Already first-year university enrolment is up almost 7% over last year, clearly evidence of an accessible system. I want to make absolutely sure that our colleges and universities continue to have places for all willing and qualified students graduating from secondary school. The government's new SuperBuild Growth Fund reflects our commitment to modernizing and expanding Ontario's colleges and universities.

This year alone the SuperBuild fund will invest \$742 million to help colleges and universities build and modernize. Of the total amount, \$660 million of public funds will go towards new capital projects. Major private sector contributions are also expected. As well, we have announced a \$23-million increase in base operating funding to help post-secondary institutions accommodate more students. We are working with colleges and universities to plan for the future.

I also wish to note that we want to help faculties of education address the demand for teachers in certain fields. As a result, the government is providing \$3.75 million to add at least 500 new enrolment places to the consecutive teacher education program.

Affordability: Other initiatives are underway to ensure that students will be able to afford post-secondary education. Last fiscal year we spent \$535 million through the Ontario student assistance program to help more than 190,000 students with the cost of their education. Average support was more than \$7,500 per student.

To meet student needs better and to help limit student debt, federal and provincial student loan programs will be harmonized by August 2000. A recent agreement—very recent—with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation will give Ontario its fair share of the scholarship funds, with \$106 million assisting more than 35,000 students per year.

We are considering ways to introduce, by next fall, Aiming for the Top tuition scholarships for Ontario's top high school graduates in need of financial assistance. When fully implemented, we expect that 10,000 students will receive these scholarships each year.



The Ontario student opportunity grants program will provide an estimated \$300 million in grants to limit students' repayable debt.

We are also requiring universities and colleges to do their part to ensure that financial aid is available to students in need. As a result, universities and colleges will provide \$126 million directly to students this year by setting aside 30% of tuition fee increases.

We have worked with the colleges and universities to set up Ontario student opportunity trust funds at each institution. As a result, and with contributions from the private sector, nearly \$600 million in permanent endowments will provide additional funding for student assistance. These funds will provide assistance for up to 185,000 students over a 10-year period.

Students have asked us to consider allowing them to earn more than the current \$600 per academic year while they are studying before their eligibility for OSAP is affected, and we are looking at how this might be achieved.

Quality and relevance: In the spirit of greater accountability, which is visible now in all facets of the government's activities, we last year introduced key performance indicators to measure how well colleges and universities are turning out graduates with skills needed in the marketplace. These key performance indicators measure rates of employment and satisfaction on the part of graduates, employers and students. Recently published results for colleges reported that 89% of college graduates were employed within six months of graduation and that 80% of employers surveyed were satisfied with the preparation that college graduates had received. Ultimately, we will be using such results to determine how we will distribute up to 10% of the provincial colleges operating budget.

We are responding to Ontario's shortage of skilled, high-technology workers through the access to opportunities program. It will provide \$228 million over three years to double the number of students who enrol in computer science and high-demand engineering programs at universities. Enrolment in related community college programs and eligible university graduate programs will also increase by 50%. We expect to fund about 23,000 new spaces in these programs.

In closing, I want to report that the ministry is working hard to develop timely, innovative partnerships with educational institutions and the private sector to ensure that we focus our resources as productively and efficiently as possible. We have a great deal at stake, no less indeed than our long-term economic competitiveness and our ability to generate sustaining and satisfying employment for years to come.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Minister. You're just right on time. The response will come from the opposition and they have half an hour to respond. He can take it in whatever direction he wants, either questions or comments. Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I'll be directing my questions to the Minister of Education for the next period, just for the convenience of the ministers.

I want to make some very brief comments. I understand, Minister, your comments about an aspiration for the best education system in Canada, and yet you and your government have created an education system with exactly the opposite direction. It's an unholy alliance of something as useful as the Royal Commission on Learning added to a singular objective on the part of your ministry to save money, to deduct money away from programs and in fact to cannibalize programs, to cannibalize schools and to cannibalize school boards to reach objectives elsewhere in the system. That is the source of a huge amount of chaos that isn't reflected completely in the estimates, which show us only the net results.

There is undeniably, from fairly independent sources—your own supposedly independent Education Improvement Commission has made clear that there are significant flaws in what you are attempting to do in terms of funding both special education and school boards such as Toronto.

We see elsewhere around the province mismanagement of the school reform, which you talked about so glowingly in very many terms, which again comes back to your central proposition about whether or not the money that you purport is there and available is actually reaching children or if this is something of a manufactured state of affairs by your government, an induced crisis, as we've heard so many times before.

We want to look specifically over the course of the estimates at how special education funding has been deducted, at how community schools are being forced to close, how transportation is inadequate, how English as a second language has been turned on its head instead of being retained as a useful program. We want to talk as well about how you now as minister and your government have created, virtually out of whole cloth, a significant problem in terms of teacher morale, in terms of the ability of teachers to aspire to the excellence which you attached your government's goals to in your opening remarks.

I think that there is proof in the figures that come from the College of Teachers and a number of very solid indicators that if you measure your reforms based on how they've motivated and valued and inspired teachers, there's a colossal failure in the making.

We want to look as well at some of the policies that you're funding through the estimates, things like increased commercialization in schools, your lack of response to some of the issues like toxic mould. You mentioned the McCain and Mustard report, and yet it's very clear, even in the funding figures, let alone the broader structure that you've introduced into these discussions, that your commitment to early childhood development is very ephemeral. We'll see that there are child care centres at risk, there are other things happening that you're responsible for.

Minister, I'd like to turn your attention, please, to the overall issue of funding. You have said on occasion in the House that record amounts of funding are being given to schools, and yet in a report from 1995-96 on school board spending produced by your ministry, we see that spending in 1995 was approximately \$13.3 billion, that spending went down the next year by some \$500 million, continued to go down, and you're claiming that you're bringing it somewhere in the neighbourhood, if you look at your ministry's overall spending, the overall effect of the funding formula, close to \$13.3 billion again.

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So, Minister, in effect there isn't any new money. There has been less money available, net, to school boards and to children. What I'd like to ask you is how you justify the cuts that your government has made in the education system, not just in this run-up post-funding formula but in the years that it's been in office, and specifically if your ministry would provide us with equivalencies to show the variances in year to year, especially once the funding formula is changed, if those are available. In other words, is your ministry in possession of the facts? Can your ministry really and truly tell the differences in funding—because part of what we're going to try to get at during the estimates is how much money is actually reaching children—or is it just being hidden behind convenient definitions as we look at what the impacts are? So Minister, I wonder if you would specifically tell me whether your ministry can produce for us today or in the next few days comparable amounts of money expended for the time your government has been in office, to show us what the impact has been on school boards and, further, if projections exist out to 2003, which is the funding plan that your government has put forward. Do you have those with you today? Is that something that we can be provided with?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, one of the things we've been very clear about in what we're trying to do with education funding is to take money that was in school board bureaucracy out of there and put it in the classroom, because how much we're spending on education overall is irrelevant if it's being spent in the wrong places. What we clearly saw in previous years, for example, as education property taxes soared by some 120%—and I don't know a teacher in this province who can claim to have had resources in their classroom increased by 120% in the equivalent time. It didn't happen, because much of that increased cost was not going to where it should have gone: to the classroom. We have made a deliberate choice, which we were very public about, to take that money and put it into classrooms. That has been a significant shift.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, one element of what you're saying now relates to my earlier question: Do you agree that the money available for education has been reduced in the various years that your government has been in office?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No I don't agree with that. What I do—

**Mr Kennedy:** I have in front of me and I just want to—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You've asked me a question, Gerard, and I'd like to answer it.

**Mr Kennedy:** I only want to elaborate it so that you can give me the fullest response. I have in front of me ministry figures showing expenditures, for example, in 1996 of \$12.9 billion; prior year \$13.3 billion. We see other sets of figures available to us in the same order.

Minister, I'm happy to defer this if your staff have the figures available, but I would like you to comment directly on it: Has the money available to schools been reduced?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Money available to schools: no. What I was going to say, if I'd been able to finish, was that there are a number of changes in the way we are funding education. As I said, we are shifting money that used to go to school boards, for example, into classrooms, so there are many changes. The entire funding relationship, the funding arrangements, the way money flows to school boards has changed substantially, so there are a great deal of data available which staff would be quite happy to go through. But I would like to—

**Mr Kennedy:** Has it gone down, is the one question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would like to caution the honourable member that you cannot make comparisons of apples to oranges as we shift dollars from bureaucracy into classroom. For example, payments to the teachers' pension plan would not be something that is an in-classroom expense, so that has changed significantly with the agreement of teachers.

**Mr Kennedy:** We're only talking about operating expense here.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That is one reason there has been a considerable shift in where you see the dollars. We'd be quite happy to have staff at the appropriate time walk through those numbers and see if there are numbers that can be comparable or if not. The other thing I would like to put very clearly on the record, Mr Chair, because I think it's quite important, is that special education funding has not been deducted; it has been increased.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Minister. I will refer you then, because I would like to register your answer as incomplete in this respect: There are figures from your ministry that show a reduction in overall funding. You haven't agreed that that has taken place. Then I think it is incumbent on you and your ministry to provide different figures. This is in reference to the book *A Report on School Board Spending, 1995-1996*. When we're looking for the operating spending to school boards, has it gone down?

We have school boards all across the province reporting that their funding has gone down; we have ministry figures showing it has gone down. Minister, I don't know why you don't admit that. If you think it has been made up in efficiencies and so on, that's fine, but I'm sorry that you won't at least advance the discussion today by telling us that you indeed reduced the funding.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, as I was very clear, Mr Kennedy, spending on overall education, if the money is going to bureaucracy, that is not in the classroom. We also said very clearly that we were not going to maintain spending on useless bureaucracy or duplication or waste. I am sure you would agree that would not be an appropriate step for any government to take.

We said very clearly, first, we were going to find savings in waste, in duplication and in bureaucracy, and in doing things better wherever we could, and that we would take money out of that.

Second, we also said we were going to put more money back into the classroom, and that is indeed what we have been doing.

**Mr Kennedy:** I understand that is what you often have said and you are on the record. Part of what the greater time allotted for estimates allows us to do is get at whether that is really a true or good reflection of what is happening to the school system. It's your definition of the classroom that allows you to say those kinds of things. It's too bad that you won't address the central question. You seem to be conceding there that you have cut funding to school boards.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I conceded no such thing.

**Mr Kennedy:** Then I'll again refer to my earlier request for the figures to come from your ministry. Surely your ministry can provide those figures on whether or not the funding to school boards has been reduced, and by how much for each year you're in office, and also for the years to come.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we said we were going to reduce spending to bureaucracy. We have indeed done that. That was a stated commitment we made in 1995 and again in 1999.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I appreciate and accept that that is your response and so forth.

I wonder if I could draw your attention to one of the ways that estimates, which cover a slightly different version of the expenses, reflects some of what I think isn't understood by the average member of the public.

On page 29 of the estimates we see a charge, if you like, of \$310 million to the cost of the government's end of education, but that simply reflects the amount of money being given in terms of a property tax reduction. That's not new education dollars. I was wondering if you would acknowledge that the detail which is provided in the explanations to the expenditure on page 29 is indeed accurate. The \$310 million is effectively an accounting entry and does not represent new education spending; simply that the source of the education spending is now the government's other revenue, other than residential property tax. Is that accurate?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Deputy, if you're prepared to—

**Ms Suzanne Herbert:** That reflects a funding from the provincial government to the school boards. If it would be helpful—

**The Vice-Chair:** Could you introduce yourself to the committee?

**Ms Herbert:** I should have introduced myself. I apologize. I'm Suzanne Herbert. I'm the Deputy Minister of Education. Joining me now is Ross Peebles, who's my chief administrative officer.

**Mr Kennedy:** Sorry, the answer was?

**Ms Herbert:** Minister, would you like us to walk through? If we might, Mr Kennedy, it might connect to your earlier question too.

**Mr Kennedy:** Because the time is scarce today, I really would like just acknowledgement or correction, if it's available: whether the \$310 million that is labelled the 1997 residential property tax reduction—the way it appears here is as an increased contribution from the government towards education. But as I understand it, that's simply an accounting change. Is that correct?

**Mr Ross Peebles:** Yes. Mr Kennedy, your understanding is correct. It's a reduction from the tax—

**The Vice-Chair:** Could you introduce yourself just for the record?

**Mr Peebles:** Ross Peebles, the assistant deputy minister, corporate management services.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Mr Peebles. The point I'd like to make with that is that effectively then the spending coming from the government, as represented in the estimates, is virtually the same. What would otherwise look like a 4% increase is really the same \$7.47 billion or \$7.48 billion. That's just a point I want to make, because there's an accounting entry there that makes the expenditure look a little bit larger and could be confusing to some people otherwise.

I know there's a lot of complexity arising from the property transfers as well as the school year numbers, but I appreciate having that one point clarified.

I'd like to come back to the—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I think we should have that point clarified by the deputy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes.

**Ms Herbert:** If I might, we should clarify that because I think there were, between last year's estimates and this year's, many in-year changes that make it difficult to draw the straight-line conclusion you've just drawn that the money is the same. I'd be happy to walk you through the in-year changes and indicate what has been additional money that has been added to our estimates in year, and also what money has, as the minister has also referred to it, altered as the result of an agreement with the teachers around the teacher pension plan.

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**Mr Kennedy:** Ms Herbert, as you know from the page that we're on, I'm only referring to the operating. I'm not actually referring to any of the pension fund.

**Ms Herbert:** Yes. That's the page I'm on as well.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's always good to see how different ministries address estimates. This is a little limited in detail compared to some ministries. If there's further detail, I would appreciate receiving that in writing. It would be very helpful to me in my duties, and I'm sure other members of the committee would share that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I was just going to suggest, if I may, that given the fact that the Hansard of this committee is a public record, since Mr Kennedy has raised a very valid question, I think it should be, on the record in terms of what this may well be for the understanding of all the groups that may read this record at some future time.

**The Vice-Chair:** If the member chooses to ask it in writing—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I wonder if I could draw your attention to the basic way your funding formula operates. Figures—and your ministry is going to provide some, so maybe we can depend on those for greater certainty—may show that there isn't any large increase in education funding in this province. There have been years of reduction, perhaps—you haven't conceded that—but what you're basically doing is taking money from boards like Toronto and Ottawa-Carleton and giving it to other boards across the province. Isn't that essentially correct? Is that statement something you would agree with?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For example, if there is a board like the Durham board that has been much more cost-effective in terms of their maintenance and administration, we have indeed gone to other boards that have been less cost-effective and said, "Here are boards across the province that are able to do that same good job with less cost." We are encouraging all boards to meet better cost standards in terms of things like maintenance and administration. That has certainly meant a change for some boards.

As I said, some boards have been so effective that in the maintenance line they may well have received more money. Other boards are being asked to meet that challenge as their sister or brother boards are doing. But the other thing again, which I think is very important, is that of course we are taking money from bureaucracy and putting it towards classroom spending; for example, special ed.

**Mr Kennedy:** I understand and appreciate that that is the way you've characterized it. We'll have adequate time, I hope, to address that interpretation of how the funding works. But the fact is that you do cut boards in order to fund other boards and there isn't new money coming from your government. There's no new commitment to education, virtually, if you look at the total amount of funding. This is really just shuffling within education.

I think people out there need to understand that you're cannibalizing some boards. You say you have formulas and you say you can justify it, but what you're really doing is cannibalizing one city or one board in order for other boards to receive slightly more funds.

Similarly, within the formulas, you talk about putting more money into the classroom but in effect you're taking that money from someplace. You're taking it from areas that you don't include in your definition of classroom, like special education.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Special education is part of classroom funding, Mr Kennedy. It always has been.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, there are other important elements of learning opportunities and other things that are not included.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Learning opportunities, teachers, textbooks, supports for kids in the classroom, guidance, library—all of those things are classroom.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, in terms of what you call your foundation grant and your special-needs grant, what you're working with are envelopes that turn into strait-jackets for the boards. The point is well taken that it's actually part of what you call the classroom, but those funds have changed. Those funds have started off with your artificial definitions and they have proven extremely problematic for various boards across the community. This shuffling around of money is really all that your government is up to.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I just might like to ask—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm sorry. Our time is very brief today. I will direct numerous questions—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You're asking a lot of questions. I'm trying to answer.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll make some assertions. I know they're hard to take but I'll make a few of them myself, as you did in your earlier remarks.

**Mr Spina:** Can it wait until you're in camera?

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Mr Spina.

I'd like to ask you specifically about the Toronto board. The Education Improvement Commission—and I happened to hear your responses to the media, the discussion you had there. You had recommendations for the board in terms of how they could improve saving money and so on, but the Education Improvement Commission said its single most important recommendation, the one it would like everyone paying attention to the report to take most note of, was that the learning opportunity fund was inadequate, wouldn't function.

I presume and draw the inference from that, and from the way Mr Cooke explained it to staff in a briefing, that that's the case today, that's a problem right now. This rearranging of things within education hasn't adequately provided for urban needs, particularly those of the Toronto board, but we may find the same applies in Ottawa-Carleton and other places that share those kinds of needs.

What I would like to ask you is, how quickly will you respond and do you intend to respond—you, the ministry—to that specific recommendation, the most important one that your Education Improvement Commission could identify from its review this summer of what's going on at the public board in Toronto?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I'd just like to respond to one previous point that the honourable member was making in terms of dollars. Mr Kennedy is saying that the numbers haven't changed, that it's simply the same amount of money just being shuffled around. I hope that would mean that his party would back off of their claim that somehow or other \$1 billion had disappeared out of the education sector. I'm glad he's admitting that.



What I would like to say is that the Education Improvement Commission did flag that the learning opportunities grant—not that it didn't function; that wasn't what the EIC concluded. They have actually concluded that the policy that drives the way we fund education now is essentially sound and correct, and many boards and many of the stakeholders I've met do agree that the policy is correct. They do believe, in their view, that the Toronto board must have more money in that particular grant.

As we work with the board through their particular restructuring and transition steps, which are extremely challenging for them, and we acknowledge that, there have been several hundreds of millions of dollars available for transition in this province. The Toronto board has been the biggest recipient of those dollars to help them through. As with the learning opportunities grant and as with the entire grant, we are looking at where we need to change here or there. Perhaps in some cases boards might need more flexibility; in other cases they might need a few more dollars here as opposed to there. So we're looking at those next year in terms of whether there are any changes that we may need to make.

The EIC has made a number of recommendations. They also recommended that the board had a great deal of work yet to do itself in terms of making itself more cost effective. The board certainly acknowledges that and is doing that, and we have been prepared to assist them through the next several years to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** I guess I don't understand, Minister. You pay \$6 million or \$7 million for the Education Improvement Commission. It does a report. It's already a bit dated; it was done in the summertime, and it's only based on board evaluation. It's only looking at what the board itself says it's able to accomplish. It tries to review that and uses, I guess, the best devices at hand, and it identifies and flags a problem, effectively right at the beginning of the school year. What you're saying—and I hope this isn't true for other areas that they're going to report on—is that you won't act on it till next year.

I don't understand. You've got an Education Improvement Commission that goes out there and looks at boards and says this funny arrangement isn't working. It identifies a hazard in terms of particular pressure, and you're saying it'll just wait till next year.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Kennedy, with due respect. First of all, the EIC did not say it wasn't working. It said that the financial arrangements—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm just trying to get the timetable, not the semantics.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, no—that the formula on the way we fund does work, but it did flag over the next several years—because if you go back to the EIC, they're not talking about today. They're talking about challenges as we move through the restructuring and the reforms that the Toronto board needs to make. So we're quite aware that we need to continue to work with the board to make sure that the Toronto board is capable of meeting the

education goals that they themselves would like to meet and that we would like to see them meet.

For example, last year they got \$354 million just for restructuring mitigation to help them go through that, additional money that they have received which they can use for all of these different purposes.

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**Mr Kennedy:** Again, the \$354 million became less this year, so they have only approximately, according to your ministry's figures, \$317 million this year. You're cutting them and you're on your way to cutting them a further \$262 million. Minister, the point here is the timetable. The EIC reports, you say, next year.

I want to ask you directly then on special education, do you also plan to wait till next year? You've had the supervisory officials of this province and you've had the EIC identify problems. You've had, most poignantly, families that used to receive what they termed successful support for children having that support reduced. They've turned to you because that's the interpretation everywhere in the province, not in one or two boards, that you're not being responsive.

I'm wondering, do you plan to be responsive, do you plan to adjust? We don't want to attack the formula or the language that the EIC used, but will you adjust the spending in terms of special education this school year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the things that we're working with the boards on is what would be the appropriate changes—policy, dollars or whatever—that may need to be made in special education funding. If there was a simple and easy answer, there would have been a solution some time ago.

One of the challenges that we have is that despite the fact that there is indeed more money in special education—and some boards have never seen so much money in their special education dollars and they have said so—and despite the fact that the policy and the way we fund it is better, we realize that there are challenges here, but it's not simply an issue of dollars.

**Mr Kennedy:** I know, but it is the estimates committee and we can come back to dollars as we try and understand your overall policies. What the supervisory officials said is that there's \$100 million that they're spending above and beyond what you're providing in terms of the grant. What you did last year with the manufacture of these categories is not relevant, it's what was being done two years ago by the school boards.

I just want to ask you a simple question: Are the supervisory officials right or are they wrong when they say there's \$100 million more being spent?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, boards have always topped up special education funding. That is not a new thing.

**Mr Kennedy:** When they controlled the revenue.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, they used to do more and they are very free to do that. You say on the one hand that boards are saying they're in straitjackets, if you will. On the other hand, many boards have been very clear that their special education program may be different than in

other communities and some boards are choosing to spend more than we fund. That's not a new thing. They are free to do that. Other boards are spending exactly what is funded. Other boards have actually spent less than what they're being funded in special education.

**Mr Kennedy:** Your staff has had two or three opportunities to meet with the supervisory officials, the superintendents of this province. On October 13 they said that \$100 million has to be cannibalized again from other programs to make up for the difference. Now, Minister, you've had that since October 13, and I want to know, do you believe that's the case. If you don't believe it's the case, what is your best estimate of how much of that top-up, which you've acknowledged is taking place, is out there? They can't take it from anywhere now. You've got them boxed in. Every formula is set by you. Minister, will you answer the—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If they can't take it from anywhere, where is it coming from then? They can take it, they can choose.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's coming out of things that aren't strictly in keeping with—it's coming out of textbooks, it's coming out of teachers, it's coming out of teacher-assistants. Minister, I want to ask you if you'll answer the question. Where's the \$100 million coming from? Is that \$100 million actually being spent by the boards or do you simply not believe them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Staff may well have the answer. I personally don't know whether \$100 million is an accurate figure or not. That's the supervisory officers' estimation, and that's not a criticism of them. We have met and discussed and continue to do so with not only supervisory officers but the other groups that are involved in special education funding.

It is not simply a question of how much money is being spent. They have always been able to and want the freedom to top up if they choose to. I repeat, some boards do, some boards don't, some boards spend less. There are choices boards are allowed to make to spend the money that they have. Some of them are taking the extra special education money from administration, from savings they've found on maintenance. Some are taking the extra money for special education on savings they found by doing joint purchasing arrangements with their coterminous boards. That is flexibility that you yourself have acknowledged boards need.

**The Vice-Chair:** There's a minute left in this exchange, so use it well.

**Mr Kennedy:** If you're acknowledging their flexibility, Minister, then it's too bad you won't extend them the respect of a serious response to what they've identified to you, because they've told you what's happening.

They've prescribed what the solution is. The supervisory officials of this province have called it an amputation. Minister, we're going to come back to it.

Minister, I want to ask you one simple question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have said publicly that we are indeed making a change in special education funding—

**The Vice-Chair:** Let Mr Kennedy ask the question.

**Mr Kennedy:** —one simple question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and that is our commitment and we will abide by that.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, one simple question. You've said before that the Toronto Star doesn't provide your ministry's documents. I know you're familiar with the contents of the story in the Toronto Star. Are any of those cuts going to be made by your ministry in the next two years? Are any of the cuts in the Toronto Star story going to be made by your ministry in the next two years?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I said very clearly that the Toronto Star article is not the government's plan in the Ministry of Education, period, end of story.

**Mr Kennedy:** You're not going to answer the question?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We've been very clear about our commitment to classroom education.

**Mr Kennedy:** But there are lots of things in it that weren't classroom.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We want to spend more in the classroom. We are indeed doing that. That is the commitment that we have made—

**Mr Kennedy:** That's not the question, Minister, with respect.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and that is the commitment we are speaking of. I'm not going to sit here and speculate on some article that some newspaper claims may or may not be the truth.

**The Vice-Chair:** The time is up. May I just make an observation now. I think there will be a bell shortly for a vote, in about a couple of minutes. I'm just going to get unanimous consent that we can adjourn these estimates for today and resume tomorrow, or we can continue for the three minutes and wait for the bell. Which one would you prefer?

**Mr Marchese:** That may be a good idea.

**The Vice-Chair:** What is a good idea?

**Mr Marchese:** Tomorrow; otherwise it'll be broken off.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We wouldn't want to interrupt Rosario's train of thought.

**The Vice Chair:** I presume I got the consent that we'll adjourn until tomorrow at 3:30 or immediately after routine proceedings. Thank you very much.

*The committee adjourned at 1746.*



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## **Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

**Wednesday 24 November 1999**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

**Mercredi 24 novembre 1999**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

**Ministry of Education and Training**

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

**Ministère de l'Éducation  
et de la Formation**

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES

Wednesday 24 November 1999

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Mercredi 24 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1544 in room 151.*MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING

**The Acting Chair (Mr John Gerretsen):** Will the committee come to order please? The hearings will continue. Just for the information of the committee members and the audience that's here, we have eight hours and 49 minutes remaining in the estimates for the ministries of education and training. I believe the New Democratic Party, Mr Marchese, has the 30-minute reply at this time.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I wasn't feeling well, by the way, but I didn't want to miss this opportunity. I'm still convinced I have enough lucidity to be able to engage you for a little while and in case my lucidity fails, my colleague is here to help out.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I'm always lucid.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I have four areas of concern that I want to go over with you. I'll put them out so that the civil servants can plan ahead, in case they need you.

I want to deal with local levy. I'm going to be asking questions about how much money you've saved dealing with waste in bureaucracy because you mentioned that yesterday. I want to deal with the report of the Education Improvement Commission. I've underlined a few things to help me with my clarity, you see. Fourth, just to chat with you about what is non-classroom kind of stuff and what you think about that.

First, the local levy. You must be familiar with the fact that before you folks centralized education financing, a lot of boards of education had a local levy that they applied and they raised a lot of money to provide local programs. Are you familiar with that? You are. Are you familiar with how much money we used to raise out of the local levy, province-wide?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** I'm sure we can have the officials walk you through the details if you'd like. I know your questions are leading somewhere. So I'm going to wait very patiently.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm coming. It was a \$2-billion program, a \$2.1-billion program, actually. Of course, that local levy wasn't funded by the ministry and/or supervised. In fact, they raised the money and they spent it on local programs. In Toronto they raised about \$500

million, more or less, give or take a couple of bucks, which they used for local stuff. Do you know what happened to that money or those programs?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** What? In terms of what the board raised from the local levy?

**Mr Marchese:** No, the \$500 million, more or less, that we used to raise here in Toronto went for local programming. You guys didn't supervise it or raise it, it was done locally. You've now centralized those dollars. I don't know what happened to those dollars. How do you calculate it in terms of what you provide as a ministry and what you don't? Is it out of the education funding? Is it part of it? Has that money disappeared? Do you know what happened to it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can certainly have officials walk you through how the money is allocated, but education money raised in the province of Ontario is spent on education.

**Mr Marchese:** I realize that. That's not what I was asking you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Would you like the deputy or one of the other assistants to walk you through?

**Mr Marchese:** Maybe the deputy, but don't walk me through for too long because I haven't got too much time. You understand this. If you have a quick sense of what I'm talking about, some quick answer, but I don't want to be walked through for half an hour because I have a lot of questions.

**Ms Suzanne Herbert:** If I understand the question correctly, if I might—

**Mr Marchese:** I could repeat it.

**The Acting Chair:** Sorry, could you introduce yourself please, for the Hansard record.

**Ms Herbert:** Suzanne Herbert, Deputy Minister of Education.

You're asking about how we took the total amount of funding that was available both through the taxation system and through provincial funding and how we converted that into the new funding formula?

**Mr Marchese:** Maybe. Those dollars that used to be raised locally by the Toronto system are not centralized somehow. That local levy disappeared because they don't have the power any more to raise money. What happened to those dollars? Yes, that probably covers the way you—

**Ms Herbert:** How we took those dollars and converted them into per-pupil funding?



**Mr Marchese:** Not too long though, please, otherwise I'll have to cut you off.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We know you'd like a full description.

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** Norbert Hartmann, deputy minister, business and finance. In the case of Toronto, as I understand the question, in 1997, when it was raising its own funds, it was raising a little more than \$2 billion, \$2.17 billion.

Under the new funding model, the allocations for 1999-2000 are at \$2.2 billion.

**Mr Marchese:** They used to raise \$2.1 billion.

**Mr Hartmann:** The total amount of money spent in the city of Toronto was \$2.17 billion.

**Mr Marchese:** That's the total budget?

**Mr Hartmann:** That's correct.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not talking about that. I don't think I'm talking about that.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** Yes, you are, because they raised it all locally in Toronto.

**Mr Marchese:** Explain to me, or perhaps I can ask you, were there programs that the Toronto board provided that the ministry did not fund? How many dollars are we talking about?

1550

**Mr Hartmann:** If I understand the question correctly, all of the monies that the Toronto board spent in 1997 were raised from local taxation.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand that. We're not meeting very clearly, quite obviously.

There were many programs that the province does not recognize. There was about \$2 billion not recognized by the province spent provincially—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Marchese. It wasn't a question with the Toronto board of what was recognized or not recognized. The Toronto board raised all of its money itself; we didn't fund, so there wasn't a question of whether we recognized or didn't recognize their particular programs, again if I'm understanding you correctly.

**Mr Marchese:** It seems that all of you are not familiar with what I'm talking about, and I don't have time to deal with that now, because I thought you might quickly understand what I'm talking about. But I'll make the point again. You can check it. I have to find my source so I can send it to you, because I'm talking about \$2 billion worth of programming not recognized by the province, and this is money raised locally. What you're talking to me about is all of the dollars raised by boards, and they spent \$2.1 billion and we got \$2.2 billion and you're spending more than before. I get the picture, but I'm not talking about that. I'll have to deal with that in some other way because I don't want to spend all my time dealing with that. We'll move on. It's partly what I know as a former trustee of the board, and not everybody's familiar with this. I thought the civil servants might be, but I'll have to bring that clarification to you and to them when I get that in. It'll be in writing.

Secondly, how much money did we save in waste? You talked about that yesterday. You said we saved a lot of money dealing with waste and bureaucracy. How much?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The deputy will be making some comments along those lines.

**Ms Herbert:** Our figures from the board show us at this point that the shift from administration and from the way the funding formula is calculated resulted in savings of about \$180 million, a 30% saving on the admin budget.

**Mr Marchese:** Is this the way you define waste, Deputy, or is this the way you define waste, Minister?

**Ms Herbert:** I answered your question around the administrative line. I think the government's been clear that it was going to maintain its classroom spending, so I went to administration.

**Mr Marchese:** I understood that. Thank you, Deputy. I'll stick with the minister.

You were talking, Minister, about waste, that we saved money on waste. The deputy answered and said that this is how the board has dealt with it: They shifted from administration somehow, whatever that means, and they saved 180 million bucks. I'm trying to get at what you consider to be waste. What is the definition of waste so that I can understand it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Our priority is very clearly that monies for classrooms, textbooks, teachers and students are where we put the priority. If there are any savings that we can have in non-classroom areas, we certainly have and will continue, and boards are continuing, to look for that. I think that commitment has been very clear and that commitment remains.

**Mr Marchese:** Waste is anything other than teachers and students, basically.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I didn't say waste. I just said that our priority in terms of dollars is in classroom, and wherever we can find a way to save a dollar that might've been saved because a board has been able to offer a particular program or do something on an administrative basis, do it in a different way and therefore do it for less money. Boards are certainly looking at all of those things that produce savings and so is the ministry.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand. That's pretty well what you said before. I'm just trying to be clear. I want to understand you, because yesterday in response to the Liberal critic you talked about savings we've made by dealing with waste and bureaucracy. For the benefit of those watching, they want to know what you mean by waste. I'm still not clear, in spite of the fact that you repeated this twice, what is considered waste. You might want to try again or you could just leave it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For example, a school board that owns a golf course might be considered by many taxpayers to be an expenditure that might well be waste. But I think what's important here is that the priorities are going to be in classroom. Where we can find savings we want to continue to do that in non-classroom. That is our commitment. I'm sure your view or a trustee's view

about duplication, waste within administration, might well vary. That's why we think trustees and board officials—trustees are elected by the community to make those decisions in terms of how they can best allocate the dollars.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand.

We saved money in bureaucracy as well, presumably cutting in bureaucracy. Who are these bureaucrats? How much money did we save?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'll check with the deputy, but we went from reducing the number of school boards, for example, and fewer numbers of school board officials, fewer numbers of trustees. Also, in some communities trustees were receiving a higher pay or salary or honorarium and that has been reduced. Those are reductions we said we would do and we did. So there are some examples. I know the Education Improvement Commission has been flagging, highlighting if you will, what they call best practices. There are boards that have had transportation programs that they've developed with their coterminous boards.

**Mr Marchese:** It's in here.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They've had savings there. There are boards that have joint purchasing and they've had savings when they do things of that kind.

**Mr Marchese:** That's part of the bureaucracy, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are many steps that boards have taken to save dollars where they can, and the ministry has tried to congratulate them for that, as I do as well.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll get to that, because they've been doing that and they've been doing it for years. We were doing it when I was there. I just get worried when we use words like "waste." The public needs to understand what that is. When we use words like "bureaucracy" and/or "bureaucrats," it's important for the public to understand what you mean. That's what I was trying to get at, so that you could define it for me in a way that I can understand it, and for the general public. That's basically what I wanted to ask in relation to this, and how much money did we save from all of this. When we speak generally, it's nice to have a sense, after you defined what that waste in bureaucracy is, of how much money we saved. How much, more or less, Deputy?

**Ms Herbert:** In the administration area, which the minister referred to and described around the costs of the large number of school boards that were in the province, trustees, all of those areas, we saved \$180 million.

**Mr Marchese:** It's \$180 million. That's impressive. I'm sure it must include other things because it can't be just cutting down trustees and reducing the boards. But I want to get to the education commission in terms of what they say about that because I've got some problems with that.

Minister, do you think trustees getting a remuneration of \$5,000 is good enough?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For most of the trustees I have met—and I certainly haven't met all of them yet—it's not a question of what they get paid. They're there because

they care very much about education issues. Many have either been through the system themselves or have children in the system, and the payment hasn't seemed to be a motivating factor. I can only speak for the trustees I've met, but it definitely hasn't been their motivating factor.

**Mr Marchese:** I suggest to you that trustees who are there on a very part-time basis know nothing about the educational systems they are connected to. I will say that very directly to you because I was there. I was a full-time trustee. I quit teaching to do that full time. That was the period of my ideological naïveté, I often say, because I wouldn't do it again. I was earning \$7,000 at the time. What drove me to such madness to think that I could commit myself to such a civil obligation for a mere \$7,000? I tell you, Minister, very few people want to do the job for that kind of money. They found wackos like me who didn't mind doing it at the time, but you don't find that many. If somebody's working full-time and then goes to a board meeting every now and then, they might manage to go to one of the personnel meetings or the school programs meeting every now and then, they can't know very much about education and what goes on in the classroom, is what I'm telling you. But you don't believe that's the case.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm a little shocked that the NDP would condemn school trustees in this province as people who know nothing and are wackos, and are only interested in being there because no one else will be. I find that characterization objectionable, to say the least.

1600

**Mr Marchese:** You're good, Minister. You have the New Democrats saying that the trustees who are there are wackos and I'm condemning them.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You were part of that party the last time I checked.

**Mr Marchese:** I told you that I was the wacko who would do it for \$7,000. I didn't say the other trustees are wackos for doing it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And I was polite and avoided agreeing with you.

**Mr Marchese:** Well please do, because then you don't involve the others. I was admitting to you that I was one—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, he's asked the minister to say he's a wacko. I'm prepared to agree with him.

**Mr Marchese:** Perfect.

Minister, I want to tell you that trustees who are there part-time simply don't have the time to understand the educational system. I think you have done an incredible disservice to the public, because being part-time means that the trustees—the few people who are directly connected to parents, who tried to involve them in the educational system—don't have the time to do that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** With all due respect, in many communities trustees have always been part-time; they have not been full-time jobs. I would also like to state that there are many organizations across this province with significant and serious responsibilities in communities,



everything from children's aid societies to hospital boards, that have people on those boards who receive no remuneration.

**Mr Marchese:** Right.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate the point you're trying to make, but I really don't think we would like trustees elected by their communities to guide the decisions of the education system to be there simply for the money. As I said, I can only speak for the trustees I've met, but that certainly has not been their motivating factor.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They are there to provide overall policy advice to the board officials, based on their experience and their ability to speak on behalf of their community—

**Mr Marchese:** OK, I got your point, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—but the additional support those trustees have, though—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I got—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just one minute, because I think it's an important point.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I got your point.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The additional point for those trustees is that we now have school councils—every school has a council of parents—which are also helping provide parental and public input to the school system.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, that's great, Minister. I appreciate—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's a big support for trustees.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, Minister, that's great. These parent councils are now there to play the role of trustees and that should take—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what I said.

**Mr Marchese:** So the point is that—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I said they were a support for trustees.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I want to tell you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They are a support for trustees, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm going to tell you, because otherwise you're going to take all my time.

**The Acting Chair:** One at a time.

**Mr Marchese:** Parent councils don't want to do the work of trustees.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And no one's asking them to.

**Mr Marchese:** They don't want to do the work of the trustees, and they don't have the time to do it. In my view, education is as political as what you are doing. And in the same way that you don't mind being paid \$100,000 as a minister to guide the bureaucracy you govern, trustees shouldn't have to do their job voluntarily. If you think they should, I suggest that you might bring forth a recommendation that says, "We'll do it for \$10,000, because we're here for the public service."

Moving on, Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Are you saying, Rosario—

**Mr Marchese:** No, I just made a statement.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—that all those part-time trustees who have been contributing to the system for decades—

**Mr Marchese:** No, I'm not saying that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—were not doing a good job—

**Mr Marchese:** No, Minister, listen—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—that they didn't know anything and somehow or other they did a disservice to the system?

**Mr Marchese:** No, listen. Unless I ask you a question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Because I do not agree with that.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I realize that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Those trustees have contributed a great deal to the system.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, thank you.

Trustees who are part-time simply don't have enough time to understand the educational system. That's an inadequacy, and I'm telling you they are not able to do the job well as a result of it. My view is that you folks don't give a damn because you don't want them to know very much about the educational system, and you prefer to have people who are there voluntarily, hopefully people with money who want to give their public service, and forget about the problems the educational system might be having and forget about the fact that trustees are no longer there to fight ministers who are making the cuts you're making.

Can you define for me what non-classroom education is, that you don't fund any more?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Rosario, there's one thing you raised which I don't agree with. One of the goals of our education reform is to have more information out there about where dollars are going in the system, what they're supposed to be achieving in the system—

**Mr Marchese:** I asked you what's non-classroom education.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—so that trustees, parents, taxpayers will have more information—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, you said you only fund—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—so they'll understand the education system.

**Mr Marchese:**—the teacher and the student in terms of classroom education. What's non-classroom education?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We fund textbooks, computers—

**Mr Marchese:** What don't you fund?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—guidance counsellors, library supports. We fund a great many things.

**Mr Marchese:** What don't you fund?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We also fund construction of new schools. We fund—

**Mr Marchese:** I understand that. What don't you fund?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We fund the education system. We fund transportation.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, all right. Minister, listen to me.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, you asked what we don't fund and I'm telling you we fund what is required to—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, you're not listening very well. People are watching and you're not listening.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We fund what is required—

**Mr Marchese:** That's the beauty of having television here, because you're not answering the question. That's the beauty of being here. In question period you get up, make your statement and nobody's to say whom to follow up. I asked you a question, and you ranted about something else.

Are social workers funded?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Are they part of the classroom funding formula?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We pay boards for social workers, so yes, we fund social workers.

**Mr Marchese:** They're not part of what's considered classroom funding. They're not. Are principals part of that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly principals are part of funding for schools.

**Mr Marchese:** They're part of what you fund? Is that the classroom?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can walk through the formula in terms of how certain things are classified. It may be helpful for you to sort of walk through those points.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I'll tell you: Educational assistants are not part of classroom funding, principals are not part of classroom funding, secretaries are not part of the funding, psychologists are not part of that funding—you're not listening, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** With all due respect, you're incorrect and that's why I thought it might be helpful if the—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I am telling you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Teaching assistants are part of classroom—

**Mr Marchese:** They are not part of the classroom funding.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They are.

**Mr Marchese:** Social workers are not, principals are not.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Teaching assistants are. We can walk you through, but teachers—

**Mr Marchese:** Deputy Minister, can you tell me who's not part of the—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—supply teachers, assistants, computers, learning materials, professionals and paraprofessionals, library, guidance, staff development. The list is very long about what we consider classroom—

**Mr Marchese:** Non-classroom funding here: Principals and vice-principals, department heads, school secretaries, teacher consultants—we already talked about trustees—board administration, school operations—janitors and the like—transportation, directors and supervisory officers. Is that OK with you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, I believe you have the list and the information has been helpful to you.

**Mr Marchese:** You were about to tell me what's included. This is not an exclusive list, by the way. Social workers are not part of that list, and psychologists are not part of that list.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Professionals and paraprofessionals are on the list, because they are to be funded and they are funded. I consider social workers to be professionals. I don't know if you do, but I certainly do.

**Mr Marchese:** In terms of these other non-classroom areas I mentioned, you obviously defend that, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have taken a great deal of time to develop a way to fund education with consultation to make sure that what we consider the most priority areas get the most dollars.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand, and secretaries are not part of classroom funding and so you defend that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Secretaries are part of what gets funded in the education system, as they should be. Secretaries can be a great support within a school and they do get funded. But they are not considered classroom funding.

**Mr Marchese:** It is unbelievable how we can have a discussion and/or a debate and I say they're not and then you say they're funded. You are unbelievable in terms of your ability to morass the whole thing. It never fails to amaze me.

How much time do we have?

**The Acting Chair:** You have four minutes left.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll pass it on to my colleague, who has some questions.

**Mr Bisson:** I hope I to get a chance for some questions and answers a bit later, but I want to lay out a couple of issues because I want to come back to them.

The first is that you would know that up in the Moosonee-Moose Factory area, provincial schools along James Bay—we're not talking federally funded schools—there is a teacherage program that used to pay 100% of the rental costs of the apartment the teachers were staying in when they were teaching in those schools. One of the great difficulties they are having on James Bay—it's a traditional problem they have had for years—is it's very hard to attract teachers into that area, and they need to have some kind of incentive to do it. One of the ways to do that was a teacherage program that paid 100% of rental accommodation for teachers as an incentive to attract them into the community.

What has happened since 1996 is that the school boards have been directed by your ministry, by your predecessor, to basically go to a market value system when it comes to rental accommodation for teachers. So each year we have been decreasing the percentage of subsidy paid by the school boards and the Ministry of Education towards the rental accommodation of the teachers.

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We now find—and I know this because as I travel through my riding I go into communities like Attawapiskat, Moose Factory, and other communities—that they are having a more difficult time trying to keep the teachers they've got because they say, "Listen, if I can make the same amount of money teaching in my hometown, London or Timmins or wherever it might be, why would I go to Moosonee, Moose Factory or Attawapiskat or wherever it is if there is not some sort of



incentive, a little bit more pay?" Normally that's why we go into more isolated communities.

The school board is at its wits' end with this. You would know because you would have received a letter from the superintendent of education, John McMartin, on this particular issue on October 12, who has yet to receive an answer. I'm going to come back on this a little bit later and I would want to have a discussion with you about how we can try to reinstate, in some form, some type of program to assist those school boards to be able to help with rental accommodation for teachers.

The other issue is, and I think you need to recognize it because it's always very easy to make policies here in the hallowed halls of Queen's Park—this is not a shot in the bow just to your government, it's to every government that's ever been here—we as politicians give our bureaucrats a direction, they go out and do it, and half the time they're not out there looking at what is going on in the field. I just want to tell you that outside of Queen's Park, about 1,000 kilometres north, on James Bay, there are not a lot of apartments availability for new teachers going into those communities.

This is exacerbating that very situation. What happens is that because those units are no longer held by the school board, and teachers happen to go out just in the market and deal with their own accommodation, when new teachers come into the community, the school has nothing to offer. There is nowhere for them to stay. You would know that in communities like Kashechewan and Attawapiskat you have families with 18 and 20 people living in the same house. It's fairly hard to find any kind of accommodation. We're going to get into that a little bit later. I've got about two minutes.

I want to get into another issue, because this is something that has been raised by a number of local boards in my area: the issue of the funding formula. I'm not going to get into a very long speech. I just want to make this point: You would know that your government gave stable funding, and you had phased-in adjustment funding that you gave schools last year. I call that, "Get me past the election budget," so that schools don't have to close across Ontario. That's what that particular budget was.

Schools are now worried, because they're getting signals from within your ministry that the stable funding they got last year to keep them up to at least the funding formula, equal to what they had before under the old system, that the stable funding and the phased-in adjustment funding is going to go the way of the dodo bird. That's what they're hearing from within your ministry. They're saying to themselves, "How are we going to deal with this?" For example, in the school boards in my area, if you had gone ahead and done what you were going to do about going entirely over to the funding formula that you devised, our school boards would have ended up having less money than they would have had under the old system, by more than 4%. You put in a policy that if it was below 4%, you would give this funding.

I want to come back to that issue a little bit later and ask some very specific questions about what you are going to do to the school boards across Ontario that rely on the stable funding guarantee you gave them last year, and also the phase-in adjustment funding you gave them, that allowed them to keep at least some money to be able to keep some form of education going in our communities. I'll tell you, if what happens is what we fear is going to happen and we're going to lose these two pots of money, it means we're going to have to lay off more teachers across the province and it's going to mean more closures of schools. It's not only here in Toronto that we're having problems. Come to Opasatika, if you know where that is, and go to Ramore, Timmins and other communities. It's happening all over the province. The problem is, the smaller the community, the more there is a problem.

**The Acting Chair:** That just about does it, Mr Bisson.

**Mr Bisson:** Did I have a bit more time?

**The Acting Chair:** No. You used up the last three seconds there.

We've now come to the part where the ministers have 30 minutes to reply, and that's 30 minutes together, taken collectively between the two ministers who are here. Who would like to start off?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'll start off, if I may. First of all, with regard to Mr Bisson's comments about the difficulties that northern boards have, he's quite right that northern boards have significant challenges in trying to attract good teachers, good staff. That is a challenge. We recognize that that is an issue. Staff have been meeting with the board to see what we can do, what improvements we might make.

I am not aware that we have correspondence that hasn't been answered yet, but I'll have staff follow up, and if there is further information that we can provide you during the course of these discussions, we certainly will. I appreciate your raising it. I know that in one of the first briefings I had about some of our northern boards the staff put up the map, and the geography they have to cover is quite daunting. I have been in many of those communities myself and I certainly appreciate that.

The other thing that is important to note is that some of the improvements on accommodation, for example, to give boards more flexibility in making decisions about the school spaces they need, are permanent changes to help give boards more flexibility. We can certainly walk through more details on that if you'd like.

In answer to some of the points that had been made before, I'd like to get on the record so that we're clear that we've taken a grant structure, if you will, a way to fund education, that was incredibly complex. Perhaps some of the officials who worked with it on a daily basis understood it, but very few people were able to. There were something like 34 different calculations, categories or whatever. What we've done is to make it much more transparent so that trustees, parents and taxpayers can see where the money is going and for what reason; also to make it much more equitable, so that just because a child

is living in a community, for example, a northern community, where they don't have a rich assessment base, they're not disadvantaged or underprivileged, so that every board has access to equitable funding and we can have good education in whatever community that child lives.

There is the foundation grant that goes to schools. We also have very many special-purpose grants: for special education, which is designed around the number of students that boards have with special education needs; a language grant; specific grants for geographic challenges that some boards may have for school authorities; we have a learning opportunities grant, and that is money that goes to boards, for example, the Toronto board or other boards that have significant challenges in education because of the populations they serve; grants for adult and continuing education; a summer school grant; a teacher compensation grant; an early-learning grant for those school boards that may not provide junior kindergarten, so they have an alternative, an early learning grant they can use; transportation; and also for administration and governance. Under the pupil accommodation grant, we have monies for school operations, school renewal, new pupil places.

There are many things that are considered to be part of what we need to fund in order to have a good education system. But we also have said very clearly that there are certain priorities within the funding, as there always are, the same way that those of us in our household budgets or people who run small businesses set priorities for where their monies go. The priority we have set is very much for teachers and students and the supports they need in the classroom. We think that's an appropriate priority. It certainly meets what taxpayers have said they want, and we've actually increased those monies.

I don't know, Minister Cunningham, if there are any points you want to make in the time we have available.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No.

**The Acting Chair:** Is there anything further you want to say, Mrs Ecker?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the other points I want to make here is on the issue of special education funding, which was raised yesterday. I know that there is a great deal of common ground between the members here in this room and in the Legislature about sharing the desire to help support special education in the province, to help support students with special needs, and those supports can make quite a difference as to whether or not that young person will achieve success in education. That's why we have increased the monies for special education. The amount now is \$1.2 billion, which is more than what any other Ontario government has been able to spend on this important support.

I think it's also important to recognize how we arrived at that figure. We started by saying to the school boards, "What do you spend on special education?" because we felt it was important to reflect the expenditures that were already out there. That was sort of the base, and then we increased from there, up to \$1.2 billion.

**1620**

We also understood that there needed to be increases, so this funding has increased. It was increased \$127 million last year and another \$32.5 million this year. It's interesting to point out as well that while some of the money that goes to boards for special education is very much tied to the particular needs of high-needs students—for example, if we have students with higher needs there are higher monies available for that—we also recognize that boards require money, that there's more flexibility around how they use it. So the \$32 million that went in this year for boards, additional money for special education, is money they can use very flexibly.

Some of the issues that we're looking at in terms of how do we take the increased dollars and the improvements in policy and make it work even better: On the one hand we have individuals who are saying that there need to be more restrictions on how the boards spend those dollars; on the other hand there are those who are saying that we need to have even more rules, more rigid walls, if you will, around that money. Those are really important points that we are trying to resolve with boards and with parents.

**The Acting Chair:** OK. We then we go to the Liberal caucus for 20 minutes and we'll start our rotation.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Minister, I would like to direct your attention to the special-needs program that we touched on yesterday. I particularly wanted to get your commitment on the record in terms of what you're going to do, in the face of agreement by the boards across this province, that there are serious flaws in your funding model. This is not a question, they say, of a Band-Aid, it's a question of serious flaws. On October 14 the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials Association for the public boards said that this is a disaster, that you have to fix it.

Minister, you've tried to say at different that there's additional money, you've tried to put to us that somehow you are taking care of the problem, and you know full well that for a long time these officials have said to you very clearly that money has been taken away by your ministry from what was spent before, that you are responsible for the hardship that's going on in their schools. I want to know whether you are committed to responding and changing the special education this year so that kids are not disadvantaged because of your funding formula. Are you committed to do that this year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd have some disagreement with the premise of your question. We have increased money for special education this year, we have already done that. What we're saying to the boards now is that we have increased dollars, we have made policy changes—even the Education Improvement Commission has said that the policies around our funding are the correct ones—that we quite recognize that changes and improvements need to be made.

**Mr Kennedy:** Why can't I get an answer to my question? Are you going to improve it this year or not? They have said the model is seriously flawed. They



didn't agree with the EIC, they didn't agree with you, and they're saying it's a priority because it affects all their students. Your whole funding formula is about cannibalizing some programs and putting it into other programs. That's what you do over and over again: You cannibalize one board and put it in another board, you cannibalize one program and put it in another program and now you're forcing them to do that. This is what they say. They say that additional funds are required. They say that they are drawing much-needed funds from other parts of the budget.

These are the supervisory officers, the directors of education, the superintendents from all around the province. They've put this to you, they've offered to co-operate, they've had meetings with you and your officials and nothing has changed. So for the parents of the kids who are out there in multiple communities—in almost every community there are kids who had services last year who don't have them this year—they want to know the answer to a simple and direct question: Will you act on it this year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we will act on this when we have a consensus about the steps that need to be changed. On the one hand we've had feedback from parents and boards that have said they don't want to have money restricted to special ed, that there need to be fewer restrictions around that money being spent on special ed and there needs to be more money for higher-needs students. On the other hand, we've also heard that there needs to much more flexibility in how that money is allocated to boards.

We have also heard that, on the one hand, they want a very rigorous assessment process about the needs of students so that needs get identified and they get the services they need. On the other hand, we hear that a rigorous assessment process is a barrier, creates administrative red tape and difficulties that both boards and parents are having trouble dealing with. So we have been getting conflicting feedback. We quite recognize that there may well need to be different changes and we are looking at ways to do that. If there was a consensus on the changes yesterday, it would have been done yesterday.

**The Acting Chair:** I wonder if I could just interrupt this. Apparently I made a mistake earlier. Since the two ministers did not use 30 minutes, there are still 12 minutes left. They have the right to cede that time to the government members if they so wish. You've only taken five minutes of your time. I don't want to interrupt you in mid-course, but is there a wish by the ministers to basically cede this time to the government members?

**Mr Marchese:** As a point, to help the direction, I think you should permit Mr Kennedy to continue. Then we can have the Conservative members take up the gracious 12 minutes that the minister has ceded to them. I think his should continue his questions and then—

**The Acting Chair:** Before we go to you?

**Mr Marchese:** That's right.

**The Acting Chair:** Is that agreeable? Thank you. Mr Kennedy, please continue.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, around this province, you have school boards that have told you what is wrong. You have all the school boards, all the supervisory officials, agreeing that there is a course of action. They have presented that course of action to you. They have identified five key concerns, and the main one is completely counter to what you're saying right now. They say there are serious flaws, that this has to be taken back to the drawing board. In the meantime they have identified for you the problems and the resolution of those problems. They say this is urgent. They say it is affecting all the students.

You probably are aware—it's been raised in the House—that when a special-needs student doesn't get an educational assistant, then the teacher has to spend a disproportionate amount of time with that student. It has a ripple effect that goes right through the system.

I want to know, why can't you respond now? You don't need a consensus on everything. They're prepared to work with you. They're expressing their public disappointment that you won't acknowledge the problems. I'm asking you today—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'll finish the question and I'll be happy to hear from you. I'm asking you today, do you agree with the supervisory officials of this province that the framework for special-ed funding is seriously flawed and that more money is required if children are to receive a proper education in the special-needs area? Do you agree with them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I don't wish to sound flippant on a very important issue but where were you when I spoke to the elementary teachers' federation?

**Mr Kennedy:** In the room, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Where were you when I spoke to the Ontario Teachers' Federation? Where were you when I met and spoke to school boards? I was with the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario just this last weekend, where we have clearly—

**Mr Kennedy:** And every one of them told you about this problem—every one of them. I was there.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me answer here—where we have clearly acknowledged that there are issues that need to be dealt with in how we support the needs of special-education students. We've been very clear on that. The reason we've been having the meetings with supervisory officials, having the discussions with boards, meeting with the parents, is to say, "How do we take the more money that is in the system, how do we take the improved policy in the way it's funded and meet the needs of students in a better way?"

Let me put one other issue before you, Mr Kennedy. Your party and your leader are very fond of standing up and saying that we make changes without knowing what the impacts are or what they do, or we didn't consult or whatever. You're very fond of saying that. In this case we recognize how important this is, that we want to make sure that any changes that are made here are the right ones.

What we are hearing very clearly from the community is that there is not a consensus about what changes need to be made. For example, I have boards saying: "More flexibility. Don't tell us how to spend the money. We need more flexibility." I have many parents who say they don't trust the boards to have more flexibility. "Minister, you tell them exactly where every single dollar has to go." Right there we have an important issue which we are working with the parents and the boards to try and resolve, because I think it's important to resolve it.

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**Mr Kennedy:** You were told earlier this year that there were 23 kids in Hamilton who weren't going to school, and you said in the House, in this Legislature, that it was the board's fault. When you were told about kids from Grand Erie, you said it was the board's fault.

Minister, I have here a document that comes from the supervisory officers. In it are itemized the amounts of money that are missing from each of the boards, readily available from your figures, the amount of money that is provided for special education and the minimum amount of money they feel they need to spend. You're aware of this because these are your figures. It's \$106 million that you're not giving to those kids, that you're forcing boards to cannibalize on. You should know full well that in addition to this \$106 million that's being cannibalized from other programs, there are kids out there who are missing out right now.

You've given us a lot of process, a lot of excuses, but this isn't September 1, this is the end of November. You've had a lot of time to deal with this. I ask you again, are you planning to do something about this, this year? Do you acknowledge that there are serious flaws, not just small problems but serious flaws? Will you put more money into this, this year, as your superintendents all across the province have told you to do? I would really appreciate a direct answer. Do you accept what they're saying? Do you agree it's a serious problem? Are you prepared to respond at least to their terms, because I don't know how you get anywhere if you don't at least say to them: "We have your facts. We agree that there is a serious problem here." Do you agree today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I have acknowledged that there are issues that need to be dealt with in how we fund special education. We have said that very clearly. I have said that publicly. That is why I and my staff have spent the time we have spent to say, "How do we resolve this issue?" We have also been told that having money that's protected is very important. I've already said that some parents don't trust the boards in terms of their figures or how they use the money. Other boards have had very good programs in terms of what some parents have said.

The other thing that I should acknowledge and say again today, as I said yesterday, is that boards have choices about where they want to place monies they have. Boards have asked for flexibility and they do have it. For example, I know boards that have had savings in their administration. They have found ways to make do with less money. Those are very good stats, and they

have chosen to top up special education. They are allowed to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** That is not what the superintendents of this province, respectfully, Minister, told you. They told you it's a serious issue, becoming a crisis, because they're taking from other monies that they need. They have to reduce support to other kids in the class to pay for these funds.

Minister, the Bachyski family wants to know why their child, who used to have a full-time education assistant, has had it cut in half, so does the Gillies family, so does the McGillivray family, so does the LaSalle family, so does the Youmans family. There are people all across this province who are looking to you because all the tracks come back to you. All of the boards have got together. They have formed a consensus. You, Minister, won't go to the table with them. You're making excuses today.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, that is not accurate. You are not being accurate here. We are at the table with the boards. If we didn't think there were issues that needed to be addressed, we wouldn't be there, but we do know there are issues that need to be addressed and that's why we are at the table with the boards.

**Mr Kennedy:** My question, which you have not answered since the beginning: Will you address those problems this year? Will there be more money specifically for special needs this actual school year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I am not prepared to promise solutions that may not be the correct solutions. Again, there is not a consensus about what needs to be done. I have other groups who are telling me that it's not a question of more money, that we don't need more money, that what we need is a different way of giving it to the boards. For parents this is extremely frustrating. I understand that. I've worked very closely with many of the families in communities in my riding. But when school boards, as some have done, not all, get on their political high horse and say: "Let's lobby for more money and let's do it on the backs of special-education children, I have some difficulty with that."

We have said very clearly to the boards that we wish to work with them to resolve these issues, and we are indeed doing that. On the information you talk about, the month-old report has been out in the public domain, the figures are in the public domain, have been, and that's one of the improvements we've made to how we fund education. We want to make sure that the right solutions are there to help those parents and those students.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you haven't done anything this year at all.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You think \$32 million is nothing?

**Mr Kennedy:** The increase in the SEPPA funding that you provided in the summertime—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Maybe the Liberals think \$32 million is nothing, but \$32 million is important support for those parents.

**Mr Kennedy:**—was \$15 per student. There is \$107 million less available because of your funding formula



now. That's your responsibility, Minister, and every single dollar of that is being seen and is affecting the viability of children in the classroom. Further, you know that's not the end of the story. So you put your \$32 million against \$106 million. The boards are having to cannibalize from other programs.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's on top of another \$127 million, on top of the other monies that we're putting in.

**Mr Kennedy:** And another \$100 million.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's a lot of money.

**Mr Kennedy:** You had the temerity today to say you've had these figures for a month. You've known for one month that the supervisory officials believe they're short \$106 million. They have told you, in an unprecedented public fashion, that this has to be dealt with, and you come to this committee today and have not one single solution. You provide no figures to show any variance with these figures that you say have been in the public domain for one month.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They've been in the public—

**Mr Kennedy:** Do you accept these figures? Do you accept that the boards are having to spend \$107 million?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I know you're trying to write your news release for the news camera that's out there. I understand what you're trying to do here. You're trying to get a news release out of it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want your answer, and if you want to play games, that's fine. There's no news camera here. Just answer the question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As the Minister of Education, I don't have the luxury for quick-hit political headlines that you do. I have the responsibility to solve problems and that's indeed what we're doing. I've met with the supervisory officials. I've met with parents. We are continuing to do that.

This press release is their version and their claim. I do not dispute or argue or confirm. That is their particular claim.

**Mr Kennedy:** We are here on behalf of the Legislature to look at the facts. If you have facts, you should bring them to this committee.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm not going to sit here and get into some argument about whether it's \$1 million or \$10 million or what the figure is. What we are very clear about, and perhaps you haven't been listening, is that regardless of how much money it is, we need to do a better job with those dollars or other dollars or new policies. We know we need to do a better job and that's what we're working on doing.

**Mr Kennedy:** They're shutting down resources now for special needs kids. In the Sarnia board, they used all the mitigation funds they had, which could have been used, in balance, for a lot of different programs changes they had to contend with. They used all of it for special needs. So they only lost \$1.4 million this year that they could have. They spent \$2.5 million of money for various purposes, all of it on special needs. They are trying to figure out how they are going to sustain services. They've taken away \$1.4 million. There's another \$2.5

million to go. What you have told the boards, in the letter here from the Sarnia-Lambton board, is that you will not respond until next April.

All I asked at the outset was something fairly reasonable. Are you going to make in-year changes? Is there some hope for these families, for these boards? They're getting very frustrated. There are programs on the chopping block right now, resources they're taking away because they're scavenging them, they're cannibalizing them out of other programs. That is not an unreasonable question and I'm here on their behalf to ask that question. I believe you've had enough time to at least examine it, to know whether or not there is going to be action this year, and as the supervisory officials recommend and I think I heard you say earlier, it needs to be substantive action. Will it happen in this school year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** When we have the solutions to the issues that we are having to address we will put those solutions in place. As I said, if the solutions were there yesterday, it would have been done yesterday. If they are there today, they will be done today. If they're there tomorrow, they will be done tomorrow. I appreciate the frustration, I appreciate the desire that we all have here to solve this, but at the same time there are some challenges we have in order to solve that.

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**Mr Kennedy:** Why is there a challenge, Minister, to simply be able to address the substance of the funding? Some \$107 million on a \$1.2-billion program is a substantial amount of money, it is not around the edges, and the needs have been identified to be larger.

Your government has chosen deliberately to freeze the ISA funding for the most severely handicapped. That's a choice your government made. You chose not to respond when the supervisory officials said: "Here's what's really out there. Here's what the boards are actually spending." That's your choice not to respond. I'm asking you to take responsibility for those actions. I don't doubt your good faith in finding answers, but it is strange if you cannot at least see that there are consequences out there. There are hundreds of families who are being denied education right now.

One little guy, Timothy, came here two weeks ago. He doesn't have somebody to read him Braille in class so he can keep up with the class. I don't think the board is being hardhearted, I don't think the school is being hardhearted. There was another young fellow, Josh, who wasn't in school because of his particular disability. He needs a full-time EA. I'm hoping that we're not going to let kids caught between bureaucracies or ideologies or whatever, that these kids will see some expedient response from you, and that's the only undertaking I've asked you to provide today. It is very frustrating—you're right—to constantly hear from these families and say that the minister has not given any indication that she will indeed act this year.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's not fair for you to say that because that's not an accurate reflection of what I'm saying.

**Mr Kennedy:** Then please clarify.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I am saying that when we have the solutions available to us, we will do that. There is no artificial timeline here. There is no calendar here that for whatever reason we have put X on a spot—

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, there is a calendar; it's called the school year, and these kids are losing it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me finish here. If the solution were there yesterday, it would have been done yesterday, but it isn't. I appreciate that you say the supervisory officers from the boards are saying, "Just give us \$106 million more and all our problems are solved."

**Mr Kennedy:** That's not what they're saying and you know that. That is part of what they said, and you know that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You said they wanted \$106 million or \$107 million more.

**Mr Kennedy:** You took it away from them, Minister, is the point.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, we didn't. With all due respect, I've never met a school board official who didn't ask the Ministry of Education for more money.

**Mr Kennedy:** But that's just denying the whole issue.

**The Acting Chair:** The 20 minutes are up. We will now go to the government side for 18 minutes. It's my understanding that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would not be required this afternoon after the opening statements so she asked if she could leave and I gave her permission to leave.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Thank you, Minister, for your indulgence.

I just want to refer back somewhat to some of the comments made by Mr Marchese as a reference point and perhaps Mr Kennedy as well. I do have a point in most of my rambling. I took some sort of cognizance, if that's a word, with the comments from Mr Marchese, and if I could just trace out for you a bit of history.

As you would probably know, Minister, as you've met my wife, Peggy is a teacher. But we're both educators. With five children, parents are the primary educators. I feel that parents for too long have been isolated from the process totally, and to some extent, in varying degrees of desire, that's the position I'm coming from. So I'm somewhat exasperated by those comments, that only people who make \$32,000 are qualified to have an opinion, or have a PhD, which is absolutely incorrect.

It's a noble profession and many members in my family are teachers. In fact, my sister has been recognized. She just retired—I think she's 56—with a full pension. She was a special educator in speech and language, recognized as Teacher of the Year and in that respect I have excellent relationships with her, and other members of the family are teachers.

I was a trustee. I was also on the provincial parent-teacher association long before I was ever elected, all for free. Because I have five children, I'm engaged. So you can understand, Mr Marchese, how I would take some exception with the remuneration effect. My father was a trustee and did it for nothing. In fact, they hired the

principals. Many of the people in the one-room school I went to became doctors and teachers and other professionals. So being sophisticated and unaccountable isn't acceptable to me. That's what it had become. Clearly, it was most important to have the wonderful board office and the kids in the portables. I saw it at first hand, and you did too, I'm sure, a very exasperating situation.

That's sort of some kind of mental map whence I come, somewhat different from yours, but similar: elected twice as a trustee, provincial director, all the stuff. I saw the stuff, the coffee, the donuts, the trips, the conventions, and my wife with no chalk in the classroom. I was there. I was outraged. But, respectfully, Mr Cooke was as well. When he was Minister of Education—at that time I was a regional counsellor because my wife went back to teaching, and of course I felt that as a conflict. So I ran for a municipal position at that time, because about 80% of their budgets was wages and benefits and how can you deal with a huge budget that isn't somewhat a conflict?

But respectfully, the previous government started most of the reforms even before that. You might argue that Bill Davis started the reforms. Mr Kennedy is new to the debate and he picks up the glib lines very quickly. I can see that. It's nice, it's good media. We got a bit of coverage today. But it goes back beyond that. It goes back to John Sweeney's report on governance. The issue of governance: Let's just look at that one aspect of governance. If you took it that it was \$14 billion in spending on schools, and let's say 10% was governance, administration, that's \$1.4 billion.

Let's say you eliminated half the boards. Half of that is \$700 million. I think the \$180 million the minister mentioned is just the beginning. Boards that merged in my riding took 16 and 18—I'll name them if you wish—went from structures of organizing 16 and 15 supervisory officers and directors. They merged. One of the directors got an early buyout; the rest they gave a couple of early retirement packages to, the people making 100 plus; and they took the budget that was assigned to those two boards for administration and gave themselves a 15% raise. And you tell me the trustees are in control? Get a life. It's out of control on that side.

I still repeat the same emotional response. There aren't enough resources in the classroom whenever a director is driving a chauffeur-driven car and the kids are in a portable. So the system itself is upside down. The teachers have somehow lost the context of—I believe many of them are just excellent. I spoke yesterday on one of the teachers who was recognized, from my riding, for excellence in teaching.

Going back to David Cooke and his quest to reform education, to the Sweeney commission, the Royal Commission on Learning, those commissions were begun for the reason of recognizing that the system was in paralysis. You would agree, I'm sure, that that's why David Cooke, with all his particular politics, recognized that the system was sucking up more money, more in



equity, with less and less accountability, and he said, "Gee, let's have a look at this thing." At the same time the royal commission was saying that there was something wrong with education funding.

I guess I could go on about EQAO, all that stuff, the testing. It was all started by Dave Cooke, all of it. I could give you his press releases because I've been watching since 1980, and it still isn't fixed. Do you know why? Because the kids don't have the stuff in the classroom and there's too much—I could go on. The boards I meet with: Everything is more money. Now, I don't mind the money; I want the accountability and I think that's what the minister is trying to do here. But it's testing; it's report cards; they can't get the software working; it's "We need another \$100 million" for whatever.

I want to get down to one of the most important things, which I support and I know our government supports: the principle of equity. In my area the average spending was in the \$5,000 per student range and there were other areas of the province where the students were getting \$7,000 to \$9,000 per student. That's not public education. That's not equity. This opportunity to change the equation while addressing inner-city school needs and social issues, across the province, is what they're working on, a very complex funding formula, equation.

To get off my little soap box for a minute, I appreciate the opportunity to expound here a little bit, because it is important. It's important to everyone at this table.

**The Acting Chair:** I take it the media has to be—

**Mr O'Toole:** No, that's not it. I could care less. I'm my own show.

But I'm quite genuine about it when I'm talking about it, Mr Gerretsen. To turn this into some little political gamesmanship, like Earl Manners and Marshall Jarvis, ruined it for those professional, excellent teachers who I think must be just cringing in embarrassment. They had no choice but to support their so-called leadership who were taking them down the road with Buzz Hargrove. What's with the kids here? I don't get it. They still haven't got it.

I would meet with them. They don't get it. Are the Liberals to be exonerated from the debate? No. Actually, when Sean Conway was the Minister of Education, I was the vice-chair of the board, I believe, at the time—new school opening. It was really ironic because we were in a very rapid growth area when Sean Conway—new school announcements were politics, pork barrel politics. He who yelled the loudest, and where they thought they could swing a riding, got the school.

Our funding formula recognizes growth. I've had so many new schools in my riding; you can't build them quick enough. Now that's what the public education system is about.

1650

Without the little tirade and drama, I'll have a sip of water and then I'll ask a question. It's written down here, so I should get to it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We wouldn't want to interfere with your rant, John. I wouldn't want to interfere with it.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, no. I listened to them turning it into some kind of media hit line.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You were doing well. Keep going.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's so insincere. It's incredible, actually.

If their span of insight is limited to the circle around Toronto, certainly they're exasperated that they're now accountable. Instead of having what Mr Marchese said, this \$2-billion slush fund—I think the numbers are somewhat out of skew. Their total spending was around \$2 billion and it was a negative grant board. Everybody knew that. They wouldn't pay it back in social contract. They wouldn't pay it back with any of the guidelines the ministry tried to set, so that we would have an equitable, accountable system. Why? Because they had the CN Tower paying taxes with no students. They had so much industrial-commercial tax base, with little communities with 10% industrial-commercial tax base, that they couldn't support the standard. But guess who is running the big institutions? The Toronto people. You have all the directors from these high, fancy consulting groups, making their \$80,000 with their alligator briefcases, telling you what you have to do and how to do it. They were saying: "Gee, you guys are out in the hokey-pokey here. You're only making \$40,000? God, you're in the boonies."

They became provincial organizations and, arguably—well, the unions did negotiate provincially, they really did. They just ratcheted—it's called whipsaw negotiations. You settle in Toronto. This is the grid for a category 7 teacher. I could go on.

I'm confident that our minister and our government, with the work of the EIC—I believe David Cooke is genuinely committed to improving education. I believe our minister has been patient, and we connected with and appreciated the professional educators that I know are still out there. I believe that working in the climate you have set—I've heard it from teachers, and they do have hope. Without hope, education is dead.

Could you assure me that accountability is going to continue, while respecting the participants, importantly the students and the teachers. If there happens to be a little jetison of another 10% of supervisory officers, salute. I don't want them showing up in the Ministry of Education payroll, though, as special ed consultants, and they haven't been in the classroom for 20 years. I didn't say I was qualified to do the assessment on the IPRCs, did I? I don't think anyone who hasn't been in the classroom for 20 years is either.

I know that superintendents and directors end up with nice, cushy jobs at the ministry. I've met them. When I went there I said, "God, I've met half these people." They were directors of education when I was a trustee. And I thought: "Gee, what are they doing here? They're retired."

I looked at the package. By the way, the Liberals were dealing with retirement at that time. They set up that whole pension deal. That's another scam.

**Mr Kennedy:** Bill Davis set that up.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, actually. Do you know who finished it?

**Mr Kennedy:** Bill Davis in 1979.

**Mr O'Toole:** Peterson finished it. Read your history.

**Mr Kennedy:** But he didn't make any provisions for it.

**Mr O'Toole:** Peterson finished it. All Liberal things. They finished a lot of things.

It's my time on the floor. You'll have your time to respond to me, and I hope you do.

I looked at the pension thing. Let's take a simple equation of a supervisor at \$100,000 year with a 70-factor pension. That's \$70,000 a year indexed for life, and they're about 55—not a bad deal. None of my constituents make \$70,000 a year, and we're screaming about students in stinky portables. They've missed the ball game, Gerard, and now they have you hoodwinked too. Earl Manners is probably making about \$120,000 or \$150,000. Do they want a Lear jet? They have a beautiful office with fountains. That's education money. Every cent of it is education money, and our kids are in mouldy portables. Are you telling me the system has been working? Get a life.

Minister, can you tell me—I'm going to let you access the floor. Actually, can I be convinced and settled down here that there will be accountability in the system? It will never be perfect. I wish we could all have a perfect world, but there isn't a perfect world.

**The Acting Chair:** He left her a few minutes anyway.

**Mr O'Toole:** Assure me that there is accountability in the system.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I must say, for those of you who don't know, Mr O'Toole and I and our caucus colleagues represent Durham region together, and I'm very familiar with his passion and his commitment to public education in this province. I certainly appreciate the concerns and the messages he's put on the table. There is accountability in the system but we know there needs to be more.

One of the reasons that our colleagues in the Liberal Party can stand and talk about different budget figures is because we have made sure that that information is available publicly so that taxpayers, parents, trustees all know how much money is going where. One of the things we're going to be introducing next year is financial report cards on boards, to be even clearer about where the money is going. One of the recommendations from the Education Improvement Commission which they had put forward was that there may well need to be further accountability mechanisms for boards, and we're looking at those recommendations as well.

There's accountability for every sector in this system, as there should be. That's why the Premier introduced the Charter of Education Rights and Responsibilities, because what we want to do is be very clear about what the responsibilities are for parents, for teachers, for the government in achieving our common goal, and that is the best education system we can have.

Both Mr O'Toole and I, coming from a high-growth region, would appreciate the changes in the way we are

now funding school boards. We have been, in that region and in other regions across the province, suffering mightily from the way previous governments had funded boards for school construction. We are now catching up at a great rate, and the boards are to be congratulated for the pace at which they are trying to do that with the monies we've made available for them.

For example, just this year alone, we're going to have 61 projects that are opening that are going to accommodate another 22,000 students. Next year it's another 70 projects, with another 33,000 students. So there have been incredible improvements in helping schools to build in those communities that require—Durham being a perfect example where young families move to start a family, to start a life in a good community. They need the schools there, and the way we fund is helping to meet that.

The other thing is, we're the first government that has actually recognized and is actually achieving that kind of accountability. On special education, we're the first government that actually said we would enshrine this money, that it's there, that it's locked in, that boards can't take it and do other things with it. If there's one message I've heard from the parent groups I've met with on special ed, and my special education advisory committee, it's that many of them, rightly or wrongly, don't trust the boards to use that money the way they're supposed to be using that money. Many of them will tell you stories about experiences they've had with boards where they don't believe that money was used as it should have been used. We're the first government that's actually acknowledged and is doing something about the way that money goes out there so that parents can indeed know where it's going and that we are all accountable for what is happening.

I appreciate your point on board officials and board staff, but because I have met and continue to meet with supervisory officers, I must say I think there is a role for good supervisory officers. We can argue about how many we need, but I must at least put that on the record as well, although I appreciate what you're saying.

**The Acting Chair:** That's the 18 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** Just a few comments before I ask a question or two. I'm glad you mentioned that you respect at least the role superintendents are playing. I think you said that. I wanted to say that I respect the role of superintendents. I was in a system where I saw directly the work they did and it's an important job that they perform.

**1700**

There are fewer of them now than ever before. Your point about debating how many there should be is an interesting question. There are fewer now than ever. They don't have the time any more to do what they used to do at the Toronto board, and now the new district board. Because there are fewer than ever, they are less accountable to the public. We don't have the accountability that you're talking about. You can talk about whatever accountability you want and however you want to phrase it, but the accountability is being lost. The



fewer administrators you've got, such as superintendents, the less accountability you've got. The fact that trustees now cover four districts whereas before we used to cover only one means the trustees now are less accountable to the public, to the parents, to us, because there's much more to do than ever before. We used to have in a family of schools anywhere from 10 to 12 schools to a trustee. Now that they have four areas, discounting the ones that have been closed, of course, they have about 30 to 40 schools to cover. It's a big area.

Luckily in my area the trustee, Christina Ferreira, is full-time. She's earning a \$5,000 honorarium and she's covering four areas. Some parents have complained to me that she doesn't return calls. Imagine, she's got four areas to deal with whereas before I had one. She's even full-time. She's always at board meetings, mercifully—I don't know how she does it but she does—and people complain that she's not returning their calls. They're less accountable because they have more to do. They're not able to return calls to parents because they don't have the time, and she's full-time. I don't know how many others are full-time.

Parents are saying, "We want more accountability of the system, but we can't get a meeting with the director because the poor director is so busy trying to hack millions of dollars" to meet your needs. But she's got no time, evidently, from what I can tell, to meet with the parents. Trustees don't have the time to meet with the parents too much because they have too many schools to worry about. Superintendents don't have time to worry about what needs to be done with parents, or to communicate with them, because they just have no time. There are so many schools in the new district they have to worry about.

I'm fascinated by the brilliance of your ability to communicate to the public that you're cutting from this mythical fat that's out there. Mr O'Toole mentioned this fat and you mentioned this fat. I don't know where you get this fat from, but obviously there is a lot of it that you want to cut. Then you define brilliantly this classroom funding versus non-classroom funding which I think is brilliant. You guys did a marvellous job of that. You say: "Ah, no. We're committed in our Blueprint book. We say we're going to protect classroom funding," and it's brilliant because now you define it, right? So whenever you want to say: "Ah, classroom funding is going up." "What's non-classroom?" "Oh, you can debate that if you want but that's where the fat is; that's where the bureaucracy is. We're cutting millions." And Mr O'Toole says, "Oh, there's much more," and he says that with pride; the minister says that with pride. We're cutting the system to the bone and nobody is accountable any more. The minister says: "Oh, no, we're really accountable. We've got a report card that's really clear so that parents know that now." That's great. I'm not sure what other great accountability mechanisms you have in place, but I despair.

But again I've got to tell you that you guys are good. The public doesn't know, really. It has a difficult time finding a way to deal with the issues I'm raising.

I talked about the local levy and the loss of those programs, and no one in the ministry seemed to understand what I was saying. Metro Toronto used to raise funds for all the school boards. Then money was allotted to the respective boards and each board, like Toronto, like North York, had access to a local levy. They were able to raise more money from property taxes, which I know you guys don't want to do; I understand that. But they used to raise that to deal with the problems that are identified in the education financing commission. Those were local programs—I was trying to tell the deputy and the minister and the other fellow who was here; I don't know his name—funded by that local levy which the ministry and your government didn't recognize. That was what I was trying to get at and I want to bring that to their attention, because we weren't meeting with minds about that. But those programs will disappear because you didn't fund them and they weren't recognized. Thus, those programs for all intents and purposes don't exist. They're gone.

The beauty about defining classroom and non-classroom is that you can hack away at the non-classroom stuff and continue to say, "Classroom funding is going up and the non-classroom is that waste part, this mythical fat that continues to grow and grow as we cut more and more. And then we cut that and we take a few bucks and we say: 'Ah, classroom funding has gone up. We've got the numbers to prove it.'" The deputy minister probably says, "Ah, we've got the numbers to prove it." You guys are good, I've got to tell you.

The minister has made reference to the Education Improvement Commission quite proudly, saying, "They say in here that the funding formula is really right on," and you accept that. You pointed that out several times. You believe them in that regard, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I certainly take their recommendations very seriously, as I do recommendations from the other groups and organizations that advise us.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure. Then they say here that the Toronto board has people who come from over 170 countries, who speak more than 70 languages. In the past five years, 50,000 board students have come to Canada from non-English-speaking countries. Of all refugee families settling in Ontario, 78% are in Toronto. They say that Toronto is doing incredibly well in spite of the problems they are dealing with. The child poverty rate in Toronto is seven times higher than in neighbouring municipalities. It's quite a heterogeneous school community.

They are saying the learning opportunity fund is inadequate to deal with this, and they say, "The most significant conclusion of this report, however"—which you didn't refer to—"is that the terms and conditions of determining the amount of this funding are inadequate to meet the substantial and exceptional challenges." They refer to the Toronto board as needing more money out of that fund. They also say other boards could benefit if you did that as well. Do you have a comment on that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** A couple of points to what you said: First of all, I find it rather insulting to other boards

around this province when the implication from you is that somehow or other if a board is spending less, they must be educating their children less well. I fundamentally reject that characterization because there are many boards across this province, over the years and today as we speak, that have had fewer resources than, say, a board like Toronto, and have been able to do as good, if not better, at educating their children. I reject that somehow or other, just because somebody is spending a lot of money, that means their children are getting better educated. The facts simply do not bear that out. I think that is one thing that needs to be pointed out.

**Mr Marchese:** But to my question, because I haven't got much time—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The second point is that we had boards out there that had in their board offices, for example, the best high-tech equipment, all new furniture, tinkling fountains in the foyer—

**Mr Marchese:** But that's not the question I asked you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and school children didn't have textbooks.

**Mr Marchese:** Please stay on the question, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That is one of the other reasons why we are changing vis-à-vis—and we have been working on that.

**Mr Marchese:** Speak to the question because I don't have enough time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** When we're getting to Toronto's needs, the EIC clearly recognized two things: (1) The Toronto board has a lot more work to do in terms of finding savings; and (2) we have to work with the board to try and find a better way to help support them financially—

**Mr Marchese:** That's great. Thanks, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —despite the fact that they're getting more in other areas.

**Mr Marchese:** That's really great. OK, good, I'm glad that you were able to put that on the record. I just want to put on the record that you use the commission when it suits you, and when they say you should do something else, you babble about other things. I understand.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You can ask more than one question, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** The other thing I want to point out, by the way, is that in this report they say: "Employee groups and social and community agencies told us that they are increasingly frustrated with the lack of opportunities to provide input into the decisions affecting the transition. Because of the range and pace of change, the board has been able to engage in only minimal consultation on many issues."

I tell you, the bigness of this board is such a big problem in terms of having the public, the parents, the taxpayers able to be part of the work and the consultation that should be happening. It's not happening. They are saying they need to work on it. I note with marvel that they say, "We've got to deal more with the Internet as a

way of communicating with them." I love that. With the poor people who can't afford a computer, well, we'll have to find improved ways of communicating with them. Maybe the report card should do it. That might help to make them accountable.

I raise these because they tell you what you should be doing. You make reference to them when you like it, and when you don't like it, you babble.

I asked a question in the House with respect to tracking publicly funded education. I pointed out that this is the only group I'm aware of that's doing tracking of all the various things they are noting—

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**Mr O'Toole:** Researching.

**Mr Marchese:** I've got to rely on something because you guys don't put out a tracking report. The minister said, in relation to my question about the fact that this group—and your members scoffed at this group when I asked it in the Legislature. When they say, "We've got a problem with English as a second language, there are tremendous cuts in programs." They talk about special education, education assistance, specialist teachers where there's a drop; 37% had a gym teacher this year, a drop of 4% from last year. Schools with music teachers also decreased by 4%. There were 8% fewer schools with guidance teachers, 10% fewer with design and technology teachers and 8% fewer in family studies. Libraries: This year 32% of the schools reported libraries that were only open part-time, a 12% increase from last year; overall, 22% of schools reported their librarians' hours were reduced or eliminated altogether. There are just lots of facts.

Volunteer hours and fundraising have gone up. Fundraising has gone up increasingly. By the way, in relation to your response to us in the House, "Is there anything wrong with the schools fundraising?" I have no problem with people fundraising, because they've always done it. This group suggests to you that they're fundraising now more than ever and they're fundraising for basic things. I find that profoundly wrong. When they're fundraising for textbooks, I think it's a problem. You can't just get away with saying, "Well, opposition member, do you have any problems with parents fundraising?" I tell you I do. When they're fundraising for basic things beyond the usual cake sales they used to have 20 years ago, we've got a profound problem in the system.

Your answer to my question when I asked it in the House was, "But, Mr Speaker, we have no way to compare this to anything." To what should I be comparing it, Minister? If you track it, I'd love to be able to make your comparisons with this report, but until you track and until you make yourself a little more accountable, we have no other way of dealing with it. Will you offer that kind of study so we can compare this to yours?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, thank you very much, and I'd like to correct what the member has said. We in no way, and I in no way, implied that we are ignoring the recommendations from the Education Improvement Commission. If we didn't want them to be out there



analyzing and monitoring and making recommendations about what was working and what wasn't working, we wouldn't have put them in place. But we did put them in place. We take the recommendations very seriously and we work to follow those recommendations when and where we can.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm happy to hear that. As in relation to this?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That is the first point I'd like to make.

**Mr Marchese:** I've got a few more questions.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The second thing that I also need to put on the record here is, I appreciate that you are a Toronto MPP, but when you talk to MPPs and parents and school boards in other communities, they know and they have seen the fact that Toronto has received considerable additional monies because they have unique challenges in Toronto—ESL, the learning opportunities grant, and there are a lot of challenges that they get.

**Mr Marchese:** So they're getting more money. Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Plus, they're getting additional monies for restructuring—

**Mr Marchese:** Beautiful. I hear you. Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've met with—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, thanks. No, they're getting more money and I appreciate the answer. Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Would you like to let me finish the answer? You've put many points on—

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Chair, I want to refer my remaining time to my colleague.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've met with the group you've referred to. I'd welcome their input, and we will continue to look at that input as we do from all the other organizations that are out there tracking.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I should also point out that they talked about improvements that were in the system too. That report also talks about improvements in the system.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** You have five minutes, Mr Bisson.

**Mr Bisson:** I've got about three questions to put in five minutes, so let's try to keep to yes and no answers as closely as we can.

I raised with you earlier what's happening in regard to what were stable funding guarantees. There are a couple of pots of money that your government last year offered up to school boards in order to keep them as close as possible to the level of funding they had under the old system. We went to this new funding formula and, as everybody knows, they basically average it out. Some school boards were winners, some school boards were losers. What ended up happening in some of the school boards like ours is, if they had gone to your new funding formula, they would have ended up having less money than they would have had under the older system.

What your government did is, they put in place—and I think rightfully so. I don't like the funding formula, but in this part you tried to at least get them up to a higher

number. You offered them stable funding and then you also offered them another pot of money, which was the phased-in adjustment funding.

Minister, you know there are a number of people who are worried that you're actually going to get rid of those two pots of money. My question to you is, can you give us some sort of indication in committee today what you plan on doing this budget year and next budget year with those two pots?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all we recognized, as you say, that as we are transitioning from an old system to a new system for funding, there needed to be a great deal of money available for boards to help in that transition, and trying to have stable money—

**Mr Bisson:** I'm being nice here.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —was very much there. We are taking a look at the funding formula, as we do every year, to see where we go next with the dollars, what needs to be changed, if it needs to be changed and what we do next year and the year after that.

**Mr Bisson:** But to the rumours they're hearing within your ministry, that you're looking at getting rid of these two pots of dollars, is there any foundation to those rumours?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I appreciate there are always rumours in this sector, as we can see. That seems to be a common thing; I appreciate that. There have been no decisions about what we're going to do next year or the year after that in terms of the overall funding. We're listening to boards, we're taking a look at the input we've received about what may or may not need to be done and, as soon as those decisions are made, we'll be announcing them.

**Mr Bisson:** I've got to say, though, Minister—and I'm not going to stay on this one because I have others to go to—that this is beyond the rumour point. You know there are school boards out there that are now starting to budget according to what the losses would be because your ministry is telling them: "Get ready. This is coming down the pipe. Those two pots of dollars are going to disappear or be phased out." So you've got school boards that are looking at what the impact of this loss of funding is going to mean.

You will remember you put that in place in order to say that no school board should lose more than 4% of what they were on before. For these school boards it would be a lot less than 4% if it wasn't for those two pots, so in communities such as mine, and I'm sure it's the same across the province, it's going to mean more school closures and more teacher layoffs, support layoffs etc.

I'm looking for some sort of assurance from the minister that there's going to be a recognition that these pots of money are very important, especially in the more remote boards, and that there's going to be attention by your ministry on trying to keep those funding dollars in place.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate the point. The way we have structured the transition funding is that there are

some dollars that boards got on a one-, two- or three-year basis, but we are looking at next year and the year after that in terms of how much money they will continue to get. I appreciate that you want a sort of direct confirmation, but I can't—

**Mr Bisson:** Do you know when the decision would be made?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Every government has this challenge with boards every year in terms of how soon we can make these decisions. We want to make them as quickly and as soon as we can.

**Mr Bisson:** Before the new year, January, February?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The grant regulation normally comes down in March of every year. That has been a cycle that boards are familiar with. I don't know when, but we quite appreciate the pressures that boards have in terms of making decisions, so we want to pay attention to that when we come forward with the—

**The Acting Chair:** Thirty seconds.

**Mr Bisson:** I've got 30 seconds to get an answer, yes or no, I guess. I talked about the teacher program for the James Bay coast in regard to accommodation. They've been trying to meet with your ministry to try to find some resolve for this because, if they keep on going this way, they're just going to be in a position of not being able to attract teachers into the community. Are you prepared to try to find a way to reinstate some of this funding?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I had understood that staff were working with the board on this issue. I'll check with staff and see if we have more definitive information for you during the course of the estimates.

**The Acting Chair:** Government members.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Minister, my question is going to be in the area of capital construction of schools. Before we go there, I was happy to hear from members from all across the province and understand some of the unique challenges they have in their ridings and in mine of London-Fanshawe. That's why this area is very important to me in my riding, because it's a growth area.

I'll tell you why I feel it's a growth area. Approximately 10 years ago, all the new developments and all the new subdivisions had stopped building, of course. The economy was run to the ground, if you will, under Liberal leadership. In doing that, there was really not a lot of need for any new schools. In fact, what I saw was that some of the older homes in the riding—these would be the grandparents. They had to sell their homes because taxes were too high. It was appalling, really, with no new growth, with schools deteriorating, with portables.

When Premier Harris was elected in 1995, that changed. Our riding completely changed. There was hope. Those empty fields turned into subdivisions. Of course, with that hope, the people I went to school with, all in the areas they grew up in, east end, south end—some great subdivisions out there, Bonaventure, Trafalgar Woods and a few others that just won't come to me right now, but at some point they will.

1720

With the tax cuts there were homes all over the place, but of course we need new schools, bricks and mortar—the White Oaks subdivision, a huge growth area in the south end of the city that I represent, and portables all over the place, again because of growth.

Also what we're finding now is that the older homes aren't being sold. Because of the tax cuts, the parents can keep their homes. So grandparents can be near their children and their grandchildren. It's great, but we still need new schools. With further tax cuts, which I'm sure Dalton McGuinty will oppose, I hope that even more fields become more subdivisions, and will need more schools.

Minister, I guess my question is, can you explain to me, because I'm sure it will be asked of me, how the capital construction of new schools works?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be very pleased to do that. Norbert Hartmann, our assistant deputy minister who is in charge of this area, would be quite happy to walk you through it. As I said, because of the way we are now funding, just this year alone there are 61 new projects. It's been a remarkable improvement and we want to keep moving forward with that. I'll call on our assistant deputy minister to come up and answer your question.

**Mr Hartmann:** The new model is a departure from the old model. Perhaps if I spend a minute recapping what the old model looked like, it might help the committee to come to an understanding of how the new model works and what its impacts are.

Under the previous model that was in place, provincial grants for capital construction were allocated on a project-by-project basis. School boards submitted capital expenditure forecasts to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education evaluated those capital expenditure forecasts and then funded projects that it approved provincially. The monies to fund those projects were paid out in full for the project at the time. If a project was approved for \$6 million, a \$6-million allocation went to that school board and that happened within that fiscal year.

There was also, however, a local share for that capital construction because the provincial grants did not cover 100% of the project. They reflected what the approved cost for a project was. Boards were responsible for any local share they had, because of the local tax that they had. They were also responsible for any unapproved portions of the cost, those kinds of things that they wanted in the capital facilities that were additional to what the capital grant program had for the province. Boards paid for those local shares through their taxes, their reserves, educational developments charges or loans and debentures. That's what the scheme was prior to the new funding model.

With the new funding model, the process was changed to one that was based on the students in the system. There is an attempt in the new funding model to measure what kind of need there is in each school board in the province. Funding then is directed to those school boards



that have less capacity in the system than they have space in the system.

In order to qualify under the new system, you need to have more students than you have capacity in schools in the system. Then there are a number of factors, which go into that formula, that determine how much money is allocated to a school board. But the first measurement is: Are there more students than there is school space.

We need to have a measurement in the system of how much capacity there is. So one of the first things the ministry did in putting this funding model together was develop an inventory of all the school space in the province, not only every school but every classroom and what every classroom in the system was used for, so there would be a fair and equitable treatment of each school board for similar kinds of uses in classrooms. So for each school board in the province, based on the same information base and based on the application of the same standards, there is a determination of what kind of capacity it has to accommodate students. That's the first element that goes into the system.

The second piece that goes into the calculation is the enrolment in those schools. That is done separately for elementary and secondary schools. For each board there is a look at the needs in the elementary system and a look at the needs in the secondary system.

There is also a provision built into the grant that as enrolment changes relative to that capacity, so will the grant. So if a board's enrolment increases relative to capacity over time, that board will get more money, because we have changed to a funding model that does not pay for each grant on a one-time basis but takes the cost of that facility and spreads it over 25 years, so that one is able—and this was another one of the policy objectives within the grant for new pupil places—to leverage more money at the front end to actually build more facilities when they are needed rather than a one-time basis over a longer period of time.

Once you have the capacity and the enrolment differential for each elementary school pupil place that you require, each board gets \$1,100, and for each secondary school place it gets \$1,560. That's based on benchmarks that were established for what each pupil requires to have a good facility to be educated in. For each elementary student, it is based on about 100 square feet per student, and for each secondary school student it's based on about 130 square feet per student. Then the construction cost is factored in, and reflects the cost to design, build, furnish and equip those schools.

That model was built on the recommendation of a committee that was representative of both ministry and school board personnel, and that process, as I think the Minister indicated to you previously, has put \$188 million into the system for this year. That money, spread over the 25-year period we are talking about, will support the construction of approximately \$1.9 billion worth of new school facilities in the province. Thirty-five of the 72 school boards are in a position to benefit from that

grant, and so there's a significant spread of the money across the province.

The other element I believe the committee would need to be aware of is the considerable flexibility in how the boards use those funds. The boards must use those funds on building new pupil places, but they are free to determine what projects they go to locally. There is no provincial determination of what project is supported; there's a provincial determination of how much money the school boards are eligible for. Furthermore, the school boards have considerable flexibility in the kinds of arrangements they can enter into to finance and build these facilities. They can raise debentures, in the way they previously did; they can enter into long-term leases to acquire facilities; they can take short-term leases for new facilities; they can have time-share arrangements in specialized facilities. That determination is made locally by school boards that best reflect where the accommodation is required, for how long it will be required and the format it will be required in.

1730

This approach means that boards can respond fairly quickly to enrolment pressures. The minister indicated for you earlier the amount of new construction being financed in the very short term by the moneys that are out there.

The final element in the funding formula for new construction is school sites. In order to assist school boards in the acquisition of school sites, boards that are in the position of having more enrolment than they have capacity in the system are able to raise education development charges to fund new sites. There are now 15 jurisdictions in the province that have implemented that in order to acquire the sites that are needed for school buildings.

That is a brief overview of what the funding model currently looks like, what its impact is and how it differs from the previous funding model.

**The Acting Chair:** Could I ask one question for clarification: Does geography within a board play any role in that?

**Mr Hartmann:** No. At this point, the calculation is done on a board-wide basis.

**The Acting Chair:** I see.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** How much time?

**The Acting Chair:** You have another eight minutes.

**Mr Stewart:** We're talking about a very emotional subject here, Minister. I guess what worries me is that emotion is taking over from education. We seem to be more intent on getting media coverage and politicking etc., than addressing the subject.

My question is regarding the grade 9 curriculum. Actually, Mr O'Toole took away my original question, which was about accountability.

I have been in business most of my life and I believe that you have to be accountable. But accountability is a two-way street. Accountability is not only from the government side. It has to be done by the teachers, by the

parents, by the students, by the boards and by the trustees. Unfortunately, in this area the word "can't" seems to rise its ugly head all the time. I don't believe in the word. I wish it was taken out of the dictionary. In my mind, there is no such word as "can't."

I look at some of the comments that have been made here today, and I want to tell you a little story. About three years ago, I went to Crestwood Secondary School in Peterborough and was speaking to a grade 12 class. About halfway through my comments, a student said to me, "Mr Stewart, would you read page 303?" I said, "Indeed, I will when I'm finished." I finished two or three minutes later and flipped through this book to read page 303 and it wasn't there. I said, "How come? What's wrong? Did you take that out?" "No," he said, "It was never in there. How can we study?" I said, "Did it come out of that book on June 8, 1995?" He said, "I don't know." The teacher was sitting in the back of the room, who was an NDP candidate by the way, and I said to him, "Mr Rex, when did that come out of the book?" "Oh," he said, "that was 12 or 13 years ago." That's the problem we have. It has deteriorated so badly. It isn't broken, but it has deteriorated so badly.

When I look at accountability, nobody seems to want to give consideration to year-round schooling. I look at the colleges. I look at Sir Sandford Fleming in Peterborough, which is going year-round. They are doing an admirable job, a very economically viable operation, because they're utilizing that building and the facilities. And you don't hear any complaints from the staff. They are using it well.

I keep thinking to myself that in Ontario we have got the greatest libraries in schools, and the public can't use them, especially on weekends. We have funded them and put money into the books. We have a transportation system where, if the boards would wake up and put their systems together, we could save thousands and thousands of dollars. That's what I'm talking about, about accountability.

I have grave difficulty, as I said, when people suggest, "No, we're accountable. We're doing absolutely the best job we possibly can." Yes, they are. But in business, you look at every nook and cranny to make sure you can find those few extra savings and still preserve the quality of education.

The question I want to ask is regarding the new grade 9 curriculum. In my riding I've heard from a number of people: "We don't know anything about it. We haven't had time to be brought up to speed. We haven't had time to learn it." That brings lights flashing in my head. Are we graduating educators who are not equipped to teach? Could that be? I don't know; I'm just asking a question.

If I want to upgrade myself and if I want to stay employed—and I've been employed. I created my own job for some 40 years. If I wanted to find out about new technology and I wanted to upgrade myself and my staff, we did it during the night or we did it during noon hours or we did it whenever we possibly could, because it meant that I could do a better job and my staff would be

able to do a better job as well for the people we dealt with.

My question to you is, Madam Minister, we have introduced the new grade 9 curriculum in the schools and I would like to know—because I'm not hearing that there's enough out there from some of those who don't seem to wish to be part of change, that we are not providing enough support to the teachers on the new curriculum.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** A very good question, because the new curriculum, which we started in elementary school and are now phasing through high school, is a very good improvement and we're hearing very positive feedback. I'll ask Gerry Connelly from the ministry, who is responsible for curriculum development and implementation, to talk a little bit about what we've done to help support teachers to adapt to the new grade 9 curriculum, because there have indeed been a number of very important supports for those teachers.

**Ms Gerry Connelly:** As the minister pointed out yesterday, on March 4, when the new grades 9 and 10 curriculum was released, the government also announced \$150 million over two years to support the implementation of the curriculum.

I'd just like to comment briefly on what has been done to date to support the teachers and the students. First of all, we have spent \$30 million on textbooks for grade 9 students. In addition to the textbooks, we have spent \$10 million to upgrade the science laboratories. We've also spent, as part of that \$30 million, funding for graphing calculators to support the teaching and learning in mathematics and science.

There are about 805 secondary schools in the province and we know that school-based training is important, so we have focused training and resources for teachers in every one of those schools, including subject-specific workshops where we've worked in collaboration with the subject associations in the province. We know there are some parts of the province where teachers may require additional support in certain subjects, so there has been training in every single part of the province with respect to subject-specific workshops.

In the past, individual teachers and schools and boards would develop units of study based on provincial guidelines, and for the first time we've facilitated, funded and coordinated school boards to work together collaboratively to develop what we call course profiles. Every single grade 9 teacher in the province in every subject has a course profile which gives them teaching and learning activities to support the grade 9 curriculum. These are available in hard copy, on a CD-ROM, and on a Web site for those teachers who are electronically inclined.

We also, as the minister pointed out, have a new provincial report card for the first time in the province and we provided training for all teachers. We also are providing funding directly to school boards to support the implementation of the report card over the next year.



For students in grade 8, to help improve their literacy and numeracy skills so that they could be successful with the new grade 9 curriculum, we had a summer school program for the first time. Over 60 boards out of the 72 boards participated in the program and provided summer schools for the grade 8 students.

Also for the first time, we worked in collaboration with the Ontario Teachers' Federation and provided summer institutes for teachers in both elementary and secondary. These summer institutes were offered throughout the province. There was a very high demand for them, and they were extremely successful and well-received.

We also believe that principals play an important role in implementation and in accountability, and as we speak there are workshops going on across the province for principals to help improve their knowledge skills, skills in accountability and implementation strategies, and in working with parents and school councils. Also, we are working with school boards and teachers to provide additional training over the year and to provide additional support materials to continue to further the implementation.

1740

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much. I have to stop you there. The 20 minutes is up.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'd like to come back to special education briefly. We had a soliloquy about board officials; it wasn't very positive. I know you're aware that the board officials who raised the problems with special education were from Durham—Bev Freedman from Durham, Terry Lynch from Simcoe and Frances McKenna from York region. I have to say I resent that aspersions have to be cast in order to deal with a subject that I think is a legitimate problem.

I'd just like to remind the members opposite that this is everybody's issue. There is a 13% cut that Thames Valley has to deal with; less money for special education than they had before the funding formula. There's a 23% cut by the Durham school board. They have 23% less money than they used to have, before the funding formula came in. There's a 20% cut at Kawartha-Pine Ridge school board. That's 20% less money that they've got now. And in Waterloo region it's a 25% cut in the money they've got available, because now they depend on the minister to provide the money.

The only real question I'd like to ask, because I don't know that it's one we couldn't agree on, is, do you have a timetable now for the resolution of this issue? Can you give any indication to the parents—I have at least 42 different families and I have letters from about 16 of the boards that have been written to various members and, I think, all of them to yourself. Is there a timetable for doing something about special-needs funding in the next little while? Is there a timetable that you can relate to us today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, you've asked this question 16 different times this afternoon. You've been out talking to—

**Mr Kennedy:** Then I withdraw it. If that was your answer, then I'll withdraw it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, just a second.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, the time here is precious.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Wait a minute. You've asked me a question, and I would like to put on the record information that would be helpful to people.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, if it's going to take away from this question, I'm sorry—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, no one is casting aspersions at supervisory officers. Quite the contrary.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm sorry. Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We've met with them. They've said they want to work with us to help resolve this issue. We are indeed doing this. I would also like to say to Mr Kennedy that we have, in black and white, numbers of increased dollars that have gone to boards for special education—

**Mr Kennedy:** That's exactly what I want to address right now.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and we quite recognize that improvements need to be made and we will work to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, if you can't give me the timeline, I would appreciate your attention to the overall funding picture, because I think the reason you can't give me a timeline is simple: You don't have the money. You've given up the money. You're cutting money in education and there isn't any money to put back in.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Last time I checked, you weren't sitting in the Ministry of Finance's boardroom, Mr Kennedy, so I don't know how you can make that allegation.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll tell you, I will support it. I will provide facts. I'm sorry the ministry doesn't see fit to bring facts to this discussion, but I will use the ministry's facts and I will ask the question. Hopefully, we can elucidate.

I'm looking at the record of the ministry for 1997, this report which I discussed yesterday. It indicates, for the benefit of the members opposite, for example, that "school board" and "administration and governance" are isolated in that report and they're isolated in the new formula. There may be some differences between them, but roughly—I've checked around and people have agreed that they're comparable—in 1995-96, \$444 million was spent by the boards on governance and administration, which is much talked about today. I have a direct question for the deputy, which could be answered now or later. In 1999-2000, the projection is for \$429 million. In other words, in the whole province there's a saving of about \$15 million. I know there's an explanation to that, because the deputy said there was \$180 million saved.

I want to offer this: Pupil accommodation, conversely, the amount of money to actually maintain schools and so forth, has been cut by \$195 million. The other comparables we have: Adult and continuing education, not administration but the teaching of people, of whom 85%

at least in my riding but I think in Durham and other places found jobs as a result, they've lost \$42 million. That's where the money seems to be coming from, those programs. Then \$32 million has come from transportation on a comparative basis, and then we don't simply have a comparator.

I'd like to ask the minister, will you make an undertaking today to provide the comparators so we can tell where the money is coming from? For example, I have here a multi-year review from the ministry that stops at 1997, and it breaks down the funding and it says the source and it says the amount. Can we get this updated? Can we have 1998 and 1999, showing the sources of funds between the various tax bases, and can we have an accounting from the ministry of comparable figures from 1995-96 to 1998-99, and even into the projection? Is that available, Minister? Could this committee have that to help with our discussions?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, the deputy has some answers to some of the questions you've asked, and if there are more questions that we're not able to answer this afternoon, we'll certainly endeavour to do our best to answer them over the course of these estimates, so I'd like to turn it over to the deputy now to answer some of these questions.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, could you answer my question. Will the overall figures—you said before, and I wrote it down because I certainly agree that it should be a much more transparent system, that the figures are available. They are in fact a little bit difficult to have. I've done my best with the available figures. I would love to have the figures put in front—I think the ministry has the resources to do that. Will you undertake today, for the benefit of the committee and the accountability of your ministry, to provide the figures that show comparables between the years your government has been in power and the years before, that can show us what kind of monies are being spent? Can that come from the ministry, because I think it would be more useful to everyone if those figures came from the ministry.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First, I thought I had answered your question—

**Mr Kennedy:** No, I'm sorry, I didn't hear the answer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —that the deputy is quite prepared to answer some of the questions you've put forward already, and if not, we will endeavour to put that information for you and the committee, so I'd like to turn it over to the deputy right now.

**Ms Herbert:** You asked, Mr Kennedy, a number of questions. What I'd like to do is—

**Mr Kennedy:** Just for your clarification, because my time is brief, one question for today—I've asked for the figures as I did yesterday to be provided, if they could be, in written form—you suggested at the beginning of one of the exchanges today \$180 million in savings in administration, and I was referencing school board administration governance as a category and I just wondered if you could help me with variance. I've looked at your figures and I see savings of about \$15 million and

I'm wondering if you can explain the difference between that \$15 million and the \$180 million you referred to before. It would be much appreciated.

**Ms Herbert:** There's a small dilemma here in comparing apples and oranges in the original school board funding formula and where we are now. My figures on that particular issue, Mr Kennedy, show that in 1997 school boards were spending about \$600 million in school administration, and the current spending, I think you referenced the number, is about \$420 million in 1999.

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, and I'll refer you to my source for that. It's page 1 of the "Overview of School Board Spending 1995 to 1996."

**Ms Herbert:** I'm using 1997 figures. That might be part of the problem. We can reconcile those numbers for you if you like.

**Mr Kennedy:** I would very much appreciate having that. Sorry, please continue.

**Ms Herbert:** That was my response to that particular issue, that in 1997 school boards were spending \$600 million; they're presently spending \$420.

**Mr Kennedy:** I see, so the \$424 million and you have \$600 million, because from this book we have two years available, 1995-96 and 1996-97, and the numbers on school administration are \$444 million and then \$425 million, and in 1998-99—this is now using the figures that are on your Web site that I have compiled here—the spending is \$424 million. Just for the benefit of the members opposite, spending on school board administration goes up this year by \$5 million and that's not set by the boards. Your ministry says how much can be spent.

I'm just looking for some accuracy in the dialogue and I know the only way we'll truly get at that—the members opposite would probably accept my figures as coming from an honourable member, but I suspect they'd rather have them from the ministry and I'll just reiterate that request.

**Ms Herbert:** The funding formula is based on enrolment, and recognizing that as the number of children goes up in a system, there are corollary costs throughout the organization, so I just want to be clear that when we're projecting figures, we're based on enrolment.

1750

**Mr Kennedy:** There is a 15,000 enrolment increase projected and I agree with that. I just wanted the figures so we could have a discussion.

Now, 25 of the boards are projected to have their money cut next year. I think that's important for the benefit—I think people have the idea that equity means people are being brought up to a standard, but a significant number of boards are being brought down, and they're being brought down significantly. Again, I'd like to propose, based on the available information that there's \$400 million in the social contract which should have been renewed, and that's been discussed—but the figures I've referred to show a cut between 1995-96 and 1998-99 in operating funds available to schools of about



\$414 million. They also show in 1998-99 that you have phased in funding of \$354 million, which will eventually disappear, for a total of \$800 million less. That's being taken out.

My question to you is, where is that money going to come from? Can we be more specific as to where you anticipate that money leaving. I've seen some boards' projections, but are there general areas that you believe can be taken away? Just to reiterate what I said earlier, continuing education or adult education gives a huge contribution. Space made the largest contribution so far of the cuts. Is that where you see more of the money coming from? Where will that further approximately \$354 million come from in the future? I'm wondering if there's any guidance from your perspective, because you have the macro perspective, that would allow the public to know where the rest of that money is going to come from.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, I believe there may well be some inaccuracies in your interpretation and I'd like to call on Ross Peebles, our assistant deputy minister, to talk about some of these figures just to make sure that the committee is well informed.

**Mr Ross Peebles:** The figures are on page 29 of the estimates book.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Peebles, just because we want to be talking about apples and apples, we're talking about the figures on board spending for the purposes of the present discussion. Page 29 of estimates will show the government's contribution. I have a question about that and I really would like to discuss it, but I wonder if I might be able to frame that for you. And if you can help me understand the figures I just cited, which were the board spending figures, I would really appreciate that, if there's any correction or changes to be made.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's why we've asked Mr Peebles to come up here and I would hope—

**Mr Kennedy:** But with all respect, he was referring to the estimates.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —that he can walk through some of these numbers for you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Page 29, I believe, which is the government's contribution.

**Mr Peebles:** Mr Kennedy, there's a difference between spending and funding.

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes.

**Mr Peebles:** I think the numbers that you're looking at from 1995-96 of the report, if that's the report that you're looking at, the one that the ministry prepared, 1995-96—

**Mr Kennedy:** That's correct, with an outside consultant.

**Mr Peebles:** Yes, they're reporting other board revenue as well as the numbers that we would now be reporting as part of the \$13.2 billion, so that if you were to be truly comparing similar things, the \$13.25 billion that we now reflect in the estimates would be effectively \$13.56 billion, if you added in those other things. If

you're interested in what those other revenues sources are—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd be very happy to have that kind of reconciliation in writing, because obviously it's to no one's benefit today that we can work that out. I'd be happy—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually, I think it is to the benefit of the committee. You've put the question here and I think those watching need to hear this answer and I'd like Mr Peebles to be able to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** With respect, Minister, I'm trying to the best of my ability, and I appreciate your critique, but it is important, I think, that if the ministry has figures, they table those figures for the benefit of the committee. I don't want to see time taken up specifically. I have specific questions I'd like to be able to make in my version of the public interest, and that's what this time is for.

Mr Peebles, the question I asked was about the degree of the cuts, the funds, \$354 million in stable funding guarantee which is going to disappear over a few years. Sorry, the stable funding leaves next year but \$354 million was in last year, it's been reduced. I was reflecting that there was approximately \$400 million in expenditures that had been reduced based on the available government figures. I was asking the minister—and she's referred it to you—where will the future cuts come from, given what I was saying before about where they've already come from? Is there some overall outline you can tell us, where that money is going to be leaving the system?

**Mr Peebles:** Well those would be board decisions, not ministry decision.

**Mr Kennedy:** OK. What I'd like to pursue next is something that I think you can help me with in terms of the way the ministry funding appears to the public. I just want to check a number of factors to see whether they distort a little bit the figures that the government is putting into the funding.

I want to refer to a page that I have, called "The Multiyear Review." It shows the provincial operating grants. The last year of provincial operating grants per se was 1997. It shows them being reduced from \$4.8 billion, almost \$4.9 billion, in 1992 down to \$3.9 billion, almost \$4 billion, as the operating grant. Is it possible for you to tell us, to provide those 1998-99 equivalencies for us? Is that available? Do you have with you today what that portion of the funding looks like? We're talking about the revenue side, distinct from property taxes and so on. Is it possible to let us know what that is?

**Mr Peebles:** Without seeing the numbers you have, it's difficult to know whether it would be easy or difficult, or something I could deal with now or not.

**Mr Kennedy:** I just wonder if those happened to be in your briefing binder. I think they would help the discussion today.

**Mr Peebles:** I don't recognize these immediately.

**Mr Kennedy:** Then I'd like to register that request.

There are things I'd like to ask you about. As we established yesterday, when there is a reduction in residential taxes by the government on one side of its ledger, that shows up as an increase in education funding, and that's just an accounting entry. But the government has also said they're going to reduce commercial-industrial taxes by some \$500 million over eight years. That, I understand, will also show up, when it's done, as an increase in education funding. Is that correct?

**Mr Peebles:** It depends on—

**Mr Kennedy:** In the estimates.

**Mr Peebles:** —whether you're looking at the estimates, where any reduction in property taxes shows up as an increase in spending, or you're looking at total board spending, which of course would be unaffected by those changes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, but I think what we're trying to establish is the government's own contribution through the program grant. If you are able to provide me with that, then we have the answer. In the meantime, I'm trying to understand the factors that are work.

Also, I understand that this year there has been a conversion of the capital grant into an operating grant, and that will also affect the overall amount. For example, if people were to look at the summary for board spending—coming back to that for a second—they would see that it looks like school operations are getting an increase, but in fact a good part of that increase is because capital is only \$54 million this year in the estimates, and some of the capital is being converted into an operating expense. Is there some information you can provide us about that? I know you referred to it when you elucidated the capital funding formula, and how it opened the options for the boards, but that means it transfers some debt on to the board.

I'm more interested, again, in a picture of the finance. How much money that was capital expenditure is being expressed this year as operating expenditure? Can you tell me that?

**Mr Peebles:** Offhand, no.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Norbert Hartmann, the assistant deputy minister who is in charge of that funding formula, can come up and make some comments about Mr Kennedy's question.

**Mr Kennedy:** While you're doing that, because it may affect Mr Hartmann or someone else, I also want to know if you can quantify for us—and again, all this could be solved if the figures were really available; I've introduced a table that the ministry now has, if we can continue that. But when the property tax base assessment increases, that becomes a benefit to the government because they control a portion of the property tax base.

Are there figures available on the impact of that? Because you only make your operating grant after that was provided. Is that available today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd like to introduce Nancy Naylor, who is the director of education finance.

**The Acting Chair:** We have two minutes left, according to when we started. The bell has sounded so I have no idea whether they are on a different clock than we are. Maybe we could finish the two minutes and at least finish this round.

**Ms Nancy Naylor:** Mr Kennedy, I understand your question is about the level of property taxes and their contribution to the overall level of education funding.

In terms of overall explanation, the government has made a conscious decision to talk about the level of education funding in aggregate terms, in order to make it as simple and clear as possible to Ontarians and taxpayers. Within that, obviously, there is a tax grant mix that shifts over time.

One of the more significant trends in that aggregate spending is that, in the provision of tax relief for property tax that goes on the business and commercial side and the residential side, the tax grant might shift considerably. So we are seeing a reduction in the property tax contribution to the overall level of education spending and an increase in the provincial grant. However, those trends really have to be looked at independently of the overall growth in education funding.

**Mr Kennedy:** Absolutely, and that's what I'm asking. Can you provide us with that information either today or between now and the next sitting? Can we have that information?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, certainly, and we'd be quite happy to discuss it.

The other thing I'd like to very quickly put on the record is that I appreciate Mr Kennedy is asking very detailed questions, and perhaps he might table them with us. Over the succeeding days we can have staff here answer them for him face to face for the benefit of committee members. It might be helpful for those who might wish to read this record.

**Mr Kennedy:** A final comment. I appreciate that co-operation, because I think it is important for people to see the commitment of the government to education from its tax base, how much money is really available. You have evinced an openness, and I appreciate that. I think it is an important part of our discussion, and I look forward to being able to use that information next week.

**The Acting Chair:** That brings us to 6 o'clock. The 20 minutes have expired. The meeting is adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1801.*









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Ms Anne Marzalik, researcher, Legislative Research Service

Ms Gerry Connelly, director, curriculum and assessment policy branch, Ministry of Education

Ms Nancy Naylor, director, education finance, Ministry of Education



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## **Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

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## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

**Tuesday 30 November 1999**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

**Mardi 30 novembre 1999**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministry of Education and Training

Ministère de l'Éducation  
et de la Formation



Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 30 November 1999

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

*The committee met at 1557 in committee room 1.*MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND TRAININGMINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION  
ET DE LA FORMATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We resume the estimates of the Ministry of Education and Training. I understand it is the NDP that has the floor for 20 minutes.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I just wonder if you can tell me how much longer we have with this particular minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** As long as we want her today.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you.

Since our last chance at having this discussion around the estimates of the Ministry of Education last week, I've had an opportunity to go back and speak to some of the school boards in regard to where they find themselves this year and next year vis-à-vis funding issues and others. If you remember, I had raised some questions around the funding formula. I need to get a clarification because I asked you a question earlier last week. I had an opportunity to raise it with some of the boards and they were not quite—how would I say it politely?—satisfied with the answer the minister gave with regard to stable funding.

You would know that last year the school boards across Ontario had been given two pots of money: One was phased-in adjustment funding and the other part was the stable funding guarantee that you gave school boards to make sure that their funding formula represented as closely as possible what they were getting before the funding formula was put in. If you went strictly with the model, a number of school boards across Ontario would find themselves at a disadvantage. The ministry, I think quite rightfully, tried to respond by providing some stable funding so that the funding formulas were a little bit more generous than they would have been otherwise.

There are a number of rumours, and this is why I'm coming back with the question. I've had a chance to speak to three of the school boards in our riding and they're all saying they're hearing the same thing. There is a rampant rumour within the Ministry of Education that there is a decision coming down the line that what was supposed to be a stable funding guarantee and the phase-

in adjustment are going to disappear this year. I would like you, for the record, to clarify that hopefully that's not going to happen; and if you are looking at doing it, what your timeline is for such a move.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** There have been a number of, as you say, pots of money or funds that have been set up to assist boards through the transition, restructuring etc. There have been funds available for giving more stable funding to boards. There have been a number of steps taken. There's no question that some of those funds were for limited times, and it was very clear to the boards what money would be available through what time.

As to where we'll go with next year's grant regulation, in terms of how much or where, I can't answer that because that work is not done yet. But we were very clear about what monies would flow within what time periods and for what purposes. There's been no change in that policy, but I can't prejudge where we'll end up for next year with some of these issues.

**Mr Bisson:** I asked you last week, and I guess for the record, when do you expect that decision to be taken in regard to whatever position the ministry's going to be taking on these two particular pots of money?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, the grant regulation for next year, in terms of how it will translate for different boards, will be announced in the usual time frame, which is somewhere around March, in the spring. If there is to be any extension or enhancement of any funding or any changes in any funding, I would anticipate that if those decisions are made, that would be the time that would occur. But we've been very clear with boards since the beginning of this process that there were time limits on certain pots of money. There's been no change on that.

**Mr Bisson:** But you recognize that the decision by the provincial government last year to do this staved off the closure of a number of programs across Ontario school boards and, I would even argue, staved off the closure of some of the schools. I had a chance over the weekend to talk to a number of trustees from all—not all four boards; I only managed to get three of them on Thursday and Friday, as well as some of the people within the administration. They're telling me—this is not from me—that in the case of the school boards in our area, especially the French-language public—and I don't want to diminish this for any of the other ones, but they seem to be more affected by this—they're going to be in a position that if



they lose that funding next year, and they're fearing that's going to be the case, it means that they're really dipping into student dollars. This is not a question of going into administration and saying, "We can do this in administration and save some dollars here, there and everywhere." It's that they're actually going to have to go into the classroom.

The Premier had made a promise, and your predecessor had made the promise, that you were going to make sure the dollars in the classroom would not be affected. The trustees want me to ask you, if it comes down to that, if taking away these dollars affects classroom spending, will the government maintain the promise it made two years ago not to affect classroom spending?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, classroom spending is protected. They can't raid classrooms for other purposes, if you will, and we've been clear on that. I understand there are challenges for boards. That's why we have so much money available in transition, because boards have been asked to find efficiencies and savings. Many of them are doing a very good job of that. The Education Improvement Commission has tried to praise those boards that have done a good job, to encourage those boards that haven't done such a good job, to share best practices. They are expected to find efficiencies and savings on the admin side, and the reason we had a time frame was so they could do that.

**Mr Bisson:** With all due respect, Minister, they're telling me that when it comes to administration, we've already taken the big hits in regard to the transition to the new boards, as well as what the new funding formula has already done. They're telling me—and you know this—that there are a number of programs that are counted outside of the envelope that have to do with classroom funding. A number of programs are not counted, and my colleague Rosario Marchese last week raised a number of those programs that you don't count as classroom spending that we would argue are. They're saying that a lot of the programs that go to support students in the classroom may end up going the way of the dodo bird if your government doesn't maintain its promise not to affect classroom funding.

The question I have is, and this is the question I've been asked to ask you: Will you maintain your promise and make sure that you're not going to negatively affect the programs that are presently being delivered to students not only in Timmins-James Bay but in other parts of the province?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Our goal here is to have more money on classroom funding. The money will grow as enrolment grows, and that has not changed. But I cannot, and don't think it's appropriate to, give blanket guarantees to boards that for any programs they wish to have—

**Mr Bisson:** So that's the wiggle word.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —above and beyond what we have as classroom programs, guarantees that we will fund anything and everything. I'm sure there are specific pro-

grams that some boards run that are different from other boards. Many boards have made decisions in the past, as they will in future, if they want to maintain those, but our goal here is to protect the classroom, to make sure boards are not raiding classrooms for other purposes. As we are hearing from boards, the challenges they have in restructuring, in transition—we know northern boards have some significant issues. We are looking at that. As I said, I can't say how we will come down on some of those other things, but we certainly hear those concerns and are attempting to work with boards to see what we can do in the future.

**Mr Bisson:** The French Catholic system and the English Catholic system raised the issue of what's going to happen with junior kindergarten. In our particular community our school boards very much believed, as boards did other parts of the province, that junior kindergarten was very important and that the earlier we get to the child—I think you would agree with that philosophy. What we do in the early years is especially important, being able to help that child to move forward in the system of education and to really grow within that system over the years. They're worried that part of the effect of this funding, if it disappears, is that they're going to be in a position of having to make choices about offering or not offering junior kindergarten next year.

The question I have for you from both of those boards is, and it's a concern for the others as well: Are you going to make sure the dollars are in place to make sure that junior kindergarten will be available to students across Timmins-James Bay and, I would argue, other parts of the province?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's a good question, Mr Bisson, because I think junior kindergarten—

**Mr Bisson:** Now we're looking for a good answer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —in many areas is extremely important. We do fully fund half-day JK. That is not changing, and if a board is not using dollars on junior kindergarten that we're giving them for junior kindergarten, I want to hear about it because they're not allowed to do that. We would take steps to fix it.

**Mr Bisson:** You're saying you don't plan on cutting funding to junior kindergarten. The school boards—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We've been very clear that we fully fund half-day JK. That has been made known in terms of what that means for individual boards. We've been very clear on that, so there's been no change in that policy.

**Mr Bisson:** And you don't expect a change either? That's one of the rumours they're hearing. They're hearing that the JK dollars are at risk.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** That's because you're telling them that.

**Mr Bisson:** No. Mr Chair, Mr Wettlaufer—I forget your riding—I think is being very facetious in his comments. It's not me putting those words to the school boards. They're coming to me as elected representatives, elected school board trustees and administration people and they're raising questions. I have a legitimate right to

come to this committee and ask those questions. You may not like them—

**The Vice-Chair:** And you are doing so, Mr Bisson. Just direct your questions to the minister.

**Mr Bisson:** I just come back to the question that was asked of me by some of the trustees, which is: Can they expect to fully see the JK dollars available in the next couple of years?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We fully fund half-day JK. We are not changing that. As you know, for those boards that don't offer JK, we also have an equivalent grant, an early learning grant. After saying very clearly that it was our commitment to fund half-day JK, I certainly don't anticipate that changing. With the early years work that Minister Marland is doing, the task group and whatever, they're going to be making I suspect some very useful recommendations about how we enhance early learning. That may well mean changes in terms of programs or money down the road but not a decrease in the commitment that we have to date on half-day JK.

**Mr Bisson:** One of the other issues that was raised is a particular problem for boards with large geographic areas. I'm sure you've heard this before, but for the sake of the committee and also for the questions that were put to me, I'd like to get some answers.

In the larger school boards, such as we have up in our area, that in some cases stem from Muskoka or Sturgeon Falls and go all the way up to Hearst, the way the funding works for schools is based on, as you would understand, the amount of space they're supposed to have within those schools. The way the funding formula is set up, as I understand it, is that if you have extra space within a school that's not being utilized, you should try to utilize that space to the maximum. For example, if you're living in the city of North Bay and there are two schools within the same system and one's half-full, the other's half-full, the funding formula effect is to try to get the students to go into one school and close one of them down in order to make sure that we're not funding schools that are half-full. There's an argument for that. I'm not going to argue that we shouldn't do that in cases where it makes sense, and in fact that has happened in the past, as you all know. Not just recently, but for the past 10 or 15 years those types of things have been happening within school boards.

**1610**

But the problem, as I'm being told by a number of boards, is that, for example, if you have space available in the system—and I'm just going to use this example: In Sturgeon Falls, in the French public system, there are some 400 spaces available within their schools, overall, at the primary level. But in a community like Iroquois Falls, which is another part of their school board about 400 kilometres away, they don't have any space, don't have any at all. They're not able to offer program to kids in the French public system. Now they're in a position where they're wanting to offer to the residents in that community the ability to go to French public school but they've got no school to put them in and they're being

penalized, as I'm told—maybe you can clarify this a little bit—that they can't get dollars to do capital work in order to be able to offer space to these kids in that community because they've got spare space within the system itself. I'm wondering, because I know there is some discussion in the ministry in trying to deal with that, if you could bring us up to date with where you're at.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually what may be helpful is to have our ADM, Norbert Hartmann, articulate the policy just to make sure that you and I are on the same page here on it and then we can go from there.

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, that's OK. That's fine. This is why he gets paid the big bucks, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Absolutely. His hourly rate is probably higher than yours and mine.

**Mr Bisson:** Combined, I would think. And the damndest thing is that they don't have to run for re-election every four years.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They have sometimes pointed that out to all of us.

**The Vice-Chair:** I've got to call the minister to order.

**Mr Bisson:** Ministers may come and go but deputy ministers and deputies stay around.

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** Now that I know I have job security.

**Mr Bisson:** Can I have a comment on that one before you—

**The Vice-Chair:** Could you please identify yourself.

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** I'm Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister.

The pupil accommodation grant, as I think I indicated at the last committee meeting, provides for monies to school boards where the capacity of the school board is exceeded by the enrolment of that school board, so in those cases where you have more enrolment than you have capacity, under the formula described the other day the school board receives money. That, as Mr Bisson has indicated, is calculated over the entire jurisdiction of the school board at this point in time. That is an issue that we're looking at, as Mr Bisson has stated, because there have been concerns raised from a number of areas. We have no position on that at this point in time but we understand that there are concerns from a number of school boards that have broad jurisdictions.

**Mr Bisson:** Can I ask either the minister or the deputy minister if you would agree that something needs to be done to address the issue that I raised, which is, what do you do in those cases where the space is 400 kilometres apart or 100 kilometres apart and it's a question of not moving the kids across the street but moving them into a whole different town, if you're going to try to address that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There's no question that for some boards this is a significant challenge, and so the question that I have asked staff is, how do we or can we make the way we fund more responsive to those larger geographical entities but at the same time keep the pressure on boards that need the pressure kept on them to make appropriate decisions about school accommodation?



Because it is a tough decision for trustees and boards to make. So we're looking at whether there are things there that we can do. Again, I don't want to prejudice where we'll end up on it, but there's no question that for some of the boards with large geography it is a significant challenge and it's one we're looking at.

**Mr Bisson:** Is there a team or anybody presently working on this that we can be talking to to offer some suggestions? Who's the team, who's running this?

**Mr Hartmann:** There is a team in the Ministry of Education, particularly for the French-language students. There's a study of the French-language school board funding because, as you know, French-language school boards are for the most part a new entity in the province, so we are particularly interested in ensuring that the way in which the funding model works for them is well understood. There is a team that has visited almost every French-language school board in the province to date and had discussions with the officials in those boards about the challenges they face, and they're bringing back the issues from each of those boards.

**Mr Bisson:** But the question was, who do we talk to? Is there a person in charge?

**Mr Hartmann:** Through my office.

**Mr Bisson:** So you as deputy minister are dealing with that. OK.

The problem is different for the newer boards. I think you're right in pointing out that for a brand-new French-language public board, the problem is very different than for an existing French separate board or English separate or public board. The issues are a bit different and I don't want to get the two mixed up. Let's deal with the first one.

I hear you saying that a team is currently taking a look at how to deal with the newly created boards to make sure they get the ability to allow their system to grow and do what it has to do according to demand. So you're going to look at how you deal with the space, let's say, between a Sturgeon Falls and an Iroquois Falls, because that's exactly the case.

**Mr Hartmann:** For clarity, we're looking at all school boards in the French-language sector, whether they existed previously or are newly created, to see how the funding applies.

**Mr Bisson:** Where are you in making a decision on this? Are you anywhere near making a decision?

I notice you were really afraid to answer that without looking at the minister. All right, Minister, we'll let you answer. That's how you remain a deputy minister. You just look over every now and then and say, "Oops, am I letting the cat out of the bag?"

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, no. These are issues we're looking at now, and we're saying, "How do we change, if we change, the moneys for next year?" I anticipate that when we talk about the grant reg in March, that would be most likely but not necessarily, if there are to be any changes in that.

Staff are doing the work. Staff have been meeting with the boards and taking a look at how we respond to the

challenges those larger boards have. I'm looking forward to making decisions about where we go from here.

**Mr Bisson:** How much time do I have left on this round, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** Two minutes.

**Mr Bisson:** I'd like to make the pitch for a number of communities, not specifically one or the other. For example, a couple of weeks ago I was in Opatatika doing community clinics. For those of you who don't know, Opatatika is a small community just north of Kapuskasing. They're in a situation where their school is about half-full. The community school in Val Rita, which is about 40 kilometres down the highway, is also half-full. Right now there is an attempt on the part of the school boards to take a look at busing the kids from Opatatika to Val Rita. First of all, most of us as parents are not very keen on the idea of having our kids put on a bus and shuttled down the highway in the middle of winter, or whatever the time might be, to a community that far away.

The other point is that for small communities like Opatatika—and I'm sure some of the Conservative members who represent rural ridings will understand this—the school is often the focal point of the community. In the case of Opatatika, it's very true. It's basically one of only two halls that are available in that community for anything to happen. There's the church and the school. If you take the school away, it makes it very difficult for that community to keep functioning the way it does. I just want to make the pitch that whatever we do with the funding formulas, we need to recognize that the issue is very different for small communities, where that's the only game in town, than it is for communities like Kapuskasing or Cochrane or Timmins, where there are more community schools in the area. I think we need to put that into the mix. We'll come back to that when I get an opportunity.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just very quickly, staff have actually visited communities. I don't know whether they've been to that one, but they have been out there to see. I think that will be quite helpful in terms of their recommendations to me.

**The Vice-Chair:** Members of the Conservative caucus.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Minister, I appreciate the clarity you bring to many of the questions. At this stage, some of the political statements have been kind of put to rest and we're trying to find out how the changes affect our ridings. I think it's certainly a difficult transition.

My question specifically is really more around the funding model. I recall that before 1995 one of the issues was bringing some equity to the public education system. It's difficult. Clearly, the record shows there was great disparity from region to region and from area to area, and even in the GTA there were significant differences in the amount of resources each student in the public education system got.

You would know that my riding of Durham really has six different school jurisdictions within it. I will just outline them for the record.

1620

There is the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, which is probably one of the lower-funded boards with a very weak assessment base and experiencing lots of growth. There is the Pine Ridge board, which is an amalgamated board now. It's one of the newly created boards of Peterborough and Northumberland and Clarington. The Durham separate board—a fairly well respected board, doing a lot of things right, at that time anyway. The Durham separate board, again, acts in harmony. The EIC said they could do more things co-operatively to save more money. I think some of the messages in the EIC report are important. Of course, there was the French district board, a very large board serving our area. Some schools were assigned to that newly created French-language board. There's some controversy there.

Allocation of capital was significant because of the growth pressures as well. The net analysis I would make is that we've generally been a net beneficiary in public, separate, French and access. I don't think I'm making a political statement, but we've benefited. I've been to probably 10 or 15 school openings. When I was a trustee for two terms, I was at one for the whole time.

I'm going back to the equity of the issue. It's difficult to say that equity means the same. I just want some reassurance. I looked at the discussions that were part of the funding model that recognizes students at risk, ESL and special ed through a series of stacked grants.

Mr Kennedy, on the opposite side, asked some good questions. But really we're looking more for honesty and integrity. At the end of the day, I think we all want to live with this system.

My final statement isn't anything more than that I recognize that 75% to 80% of their budgets are wages and benefits. In Bill 160, we said we were going to have six out of eight, whatever it was—seven out of eight was our plan—but most of the boards. Six out of eight. Clearly that wage money, for whatever purpose, has been paid for out of some other pool of money, arguably larger class sizes or something. With that general sketch of funding model and how the various silos of funding work, perhaps you could share with members the intention, the explicit outcomes you are looking for to improve the quality of public education, recognizing that it's a difficult transitional period.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'll call on Norbert to come back again on the funding formula. While he's doing that, on Bill 160 our requirement is 1,250 minutes. We don't set whether it's five, six or eight out of eight, or whatever. That has more to do with collective agreements and other issues, but we do 1,250 minutes.

The other point I should make is that for those boards that have experienced great population growth, representing communities that both you and I share, the way we fund is helping them very much. Because it's

enrolment based, because it goes to those boards on a regular basis, it promotes and supports long-term planning that enables a board not to have the kind of backlog we experienced in previous years. You are going to a lot of school openings now because we're starting to try and catch up on that backlog. That is one of the improvements that the way we finance education has led to.

I'll turn to Norbert for some further comments.

**Mr Hartmann:** It might be useful to contrast what used to happen in the funding model with what now happens so that we can get an overview of the basic structure of the model, what it is intended to do and how it operates.

As most of you are aware, prior to the introduction of the current funding formula, the way education was funded depended basically on the wealth of the local jurisdiction and the actions of the government to equalize that wealth, to a recognized limit of expenditure. From the point of view of the government's reform objectives which, as one member stated, had to do with accountability, with equity, with raising standards and with fairness, that model had a number of difficulties in it. There were fairly wide variances in spending among students, fairly limited accountability and significant property tax increases. It was a very complex model, as the minister has indicated a number of times. There were over 34 separate grants.

That model has been replaced by one that now focuses essentially on students as the basis of funding. It looks at what high-quality education is and what is required to produce it, on the one hand, so that we have a foundation grant piece to it. On the other hand, it also recognizes that there are differences between students and that there are differences among communities. So there are a number of special purpose grants that are built into the model that try to recognize those uniquenesses, and then there is the pupil accommodation grant portion of it.

I'll briefly describe the rules that govern those and the way they are constructed. Essentially the model tries to work under four very basic rules. We have spoken often in this committee of classroom and non-classroom spending. The first rule in the funding model is that any money that is put into the classroom in the funding model is used in the classroom. It cannot be used outside for other purposes. The second is that money dedicated to special education is also protected. It can only be used for special education and in those years that it is not, boards must actually place it into reserve accounts to use in special education programs in future years. The third rule is that monies for new schools, additions and major repairs can only be used for that purpose. The fourth is that the money that's provided for administration and governance is all that a board can spend on administration and governance.

Within those basic rules, the monies available to school boards are defined by the three major components I indicated earlier. There is the foundation grant, and the foundation grant is the amount of money that is made



available equally to each student in the province, regardless of where that student lives or goes to school. It provides an amount of money—that's \$3,367 per pupil at the elementary level and \$3,953 at the secondary level—to provide the basic elements for the education of the student.

It provides for the monies for classroom teachers, monies for teacher assistants, monies for textbooks and learning materials, monies for classroom supplies, monies for classroom computers, monies for the library and guidance programs, monies for professionals and paraprofessionals who support the work of the teachers, including psychologists, social workers and the like, and it also provides for the preparation time teachers need to do their work and for in-school administration. That amount of money is essentially the same for each student across the province. That is about \$7 billion worth of expenditure for the province.

There is also a recognition in the funding formula that students do not all come with similar circumstances, nor all live in similar communities. There's also a series of special purpose grants which are given to school boards depending on the circumstances in which those boards find themselves.

There are a number of those special purpose grants. The first, which has been talked about in the committee fairly consistently, is a special education grant. That special education grant is made up of two components: the amount per pupil that is given to every pupil in the province, and then an intent-to-support amount that is given on the basis of identified need for each pupil. There's about \$1.2 billion spent in that grant in the province.

The second special purpose grant is a grant for language instruction. That includes the funding of all language instruction, ranging from French as a first language to French as a second language to native language to English as a second language and the equivalent in the French language system, as well as the international or what is more commonly known as the heritage languages program. Boards do not all receive the same amount of money under that grant because they offer different levels of service and have different levels of need on that grant. There is about \$384 million in the province spent on language grants to the school boards.

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The third is a geographic and school authorities grant for boards that, as was pointed out previously, are operating in the remoter areas and rural areas of the province. That grant tries to recognize that there are higher costs when purchasing goods and services for boards that are far from urban centres. It tries to recognize that small schools have higher costs than larger schools where more efficiencies can be recognized, and it tries to compensate for that. It also provides monies to the 37 isolate boards which operate essentially in the remote areas of the province. That grant is around \$141 million in the province and has very differential impacts in different boards, depending, as was pointed out

previously, on the geography and the size of schools in those boards.

Then there's an early learning grant that the minister has referenced in today's session. That's for those boards that have decided not to put in place a junior kindergarten program. That gives boards an equivalent amount of money that they can use for children in kindergarten to grade 3 to support an early learning program, if they choose not to put junior kindergarten in place. There's a further \$36 million spent on that.

Then there's another significant portion of the grant, which makes up about \$185 million, called the learning opportunities grant, which is a grant for students at risk. What it attempts to do is recognize that there are a number of factors which provide challenges to high achievement. It measures those and provides differential support to boards based on that measurement, such as the level of family income in a board, the level of parental education, the recency of immigration, the percentage of aboriginals in the board and so forth. Those all become another component of the grant, to recognize differences between boards.

Then there is a grant around adult education, continuing education and summer school for about \$154 million. That's to provide for the adult day school programs, the continuing education programs, the heritage language programs and the remedial program that was put in place for grade 8 students this year.

Then there is a teacher compensation grant. Whereas there's a basic amount for each teacher, there's also the recognition that the kinds of teachers you have in a board differ depending on their level of experience and level of qualification. The grant tries to recognize that as well and pays out some \$665 million to school boards to recognize differences in teacher qualifications.

There's also a transportation grant, which is \$574 million, to transport pupils from home to school, to transport special-needs students and to transport students to the five provincial schools.

Then lastly there is the school board administration grant, which covers the cost of administering school boards, governing school boards and operating central facilities. That's around \$429 million. In addition, there is, as I indicated in the previous session of this committee, the pupil accommodation grant, which provides for the operation of facilities at the school, and that is about \$2.1 billion.

That essentially is the structure of the grant. It provides both for an equal amount per pupil, then recognizes differences between boards and funds those and has the four general rules around how those monies can then be allocated or used by school boards.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you, Mr Hartmann. I appreciate that detail. I have to get a copy of it. I think it would be useful for all members to have that because that is the guideline.

Outside of all the rhetoric from either you or I, the objective I hear you saying is to find some ability to customize a fairly uniform set of criteria in the grant

structure as opposed to some unpredictable, historic direction we were tending in.

I just want to comment. Were there recommendations in the EIC that you think are wise for boards to follow, and perhaps as a government should we do anything more to absolutely insist that, where possible and where it doesn't affect the student outcome—such issues as transportation were talked about when I was a trustee. Those are clearly out-of-classroom expenditures where you said there is almost \$600 million and the EIC tended to encourage that.

Is the job done? The outside classroom spending and the use of and sharing of resources—maybe it's more of a policy question but I don't mean it that way. You were administering this when there were 34 different types of grants. It must have been a nightmare to try and figure it out. It perhaps still is. I think you get the gist of what I'm saying. I think there are more efficiencies without affecting the individual student, teacher and classroom. Am I wrong there?

**Mr Hartmann:** There were two questions asked. One was whether we could make the presentation available to the committee. I'd be pleased to provide it to the Chair for the members of the committee.

The second is whether there are other areas of the grant that could still be refined. We've always considered the student-focused funding model a living entity that should be continually reviewed so it is responsive to the needs of school boards. There are a number of recommendations in the EIC report, as you've indicated, that various committees are pursuing. There are recommendations around transportation consortia, for example. A transportation committee has been established that's studying how those could be implemented across different boards. There are numerous examples of ones that already exist. For example, in the tri-county area around Kingston there's one transportation system that provides for all of the transportation for the three boards in the area. It saves considerable amounts of money in doing that. There are numerous jurisdictions with coterminous transportation between the public and Catholic boards in the area. Those are expanding as well. So there are things that are being done in those areas.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm encouraged by that, and I hope we see it as a non-stationary model.

I just want to cover one more area, with your indulgence. The area I hear most concern about—and there is no one here on either side of this particular room or any room who wouldn't support the needs of children, especially vulnerable children. As a parent of five, I know that all children have various times and places and conditions to learn. Some of it is defined as special ed. You mentioned \$1.2 billion in that particular envelope under the ISA portion only—that's not part of the SEPPA; that's the intensive support amount—which I gather is more money.

That's the argument. You're probably going to hear it from our laudable opposition today. I know their motives are genuine from the respect that we all want the best for

the students. I guess it comes back to the uniformity, having some predictable criteria by which to determine the fair use of public resources and distribute those appropriately. We can all scream and holler because we have different mandates. Mine is to bring forward policy and legislation that is fair and equitable, and the opposition's role is to oppose everything we do. I still go back to the great courage in David Cooke's determination to see these changes through by heading up the EIC, and here he is an NDP former education minister, who would probably know more than all of us in this room, with the exception of our minister and the ministry staff.

I just want some comfort. I want to push that a little bit further. I'm not pushing here for a single board, although that might be something in my third term, but here's what I'm saying to you: High-cost resources that I'm hearing about, speech and language pathology, psychologists—these are high-cost items, and much-needed—I think they should be shared between public, separate and other boards as a resource. That's what is missing. These silos of bureaucracy may have been a fine older model, but it has to be a more horizontal model of being a resource base, a service-based organization among boards to best utilize those high-cost yet very essential resources of psychologists, psychiatrists, psychometrists. These are high-cost pieces, and some of the small boards simply can't afford them. This is public education. It has nothing to do with religion.

I just want some quick feedback. Am I expecting too much to have that kind of transparency in the publicly funded education system, where they should be required—in fact, why are they in different board offices?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O'Toole, you may not get the feedback if you don't give them a chance.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Very quickly, that's a good question. Having better integrated services for health, social services and education is something that needs to be done. We've taken steps in this direction through social services and health, and now through education. We already have such a project in the north, ISNC. I won't tell you what it stands for, but it basically means integrated services for children in the north. I think we've taken some good steps in this direction—the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program; the preschool speech and language program—but there is a lot more work that needs to be done. I know Minister Baird, Minister Witmer and myself—and Minister Marland, who of course, with her responsibility for children, has a role in this as well—are working to have an even better integrated set of support services for children, whether they're in school or in the community.

**Mr O'Toole:** Preschool.

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**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Minister, I wondered if you could give us the information that was promised last time. There was none received in between meetings. Is there information the staff has brought for us today?



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Which information? I know there have been a number of things that we answered here. There were others—

**Mr Kennedy:** Last time there were specific undertakings around figures to do with revenue and expenditures and being able to provide equivalencies over various years. That was brought up and an undertaking was made to come back with that. I'm wondering if those are available.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I don't know if that's available today. I'll certainly ask staff. I know we had answered some verbally. I know I had offered the staff of the ministry the opportunity to verbally respond, so it is clearly on the record for all those who watch or read this record because I think that is helpful and you didn't seem to want us to walk through that. But if there are unanswered questions or information that you've requested, we'll certainly be endeavouring to make that available to you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I just want to express a little disappointment, because there was a specific document I provided to the staff concerning sources of revenue for the boards, and there was, I believe, an undertaking at the time that that could be provided and I think it's essential.

This is the estimates committee, it's the only opportunity that the money spent by the government on education gets a chance to be scrutinized, and I don't think it's a partisan comment, but the estimates for education are limited in their detail. There are only four charts that show the expenditures of some \$8 billion in primary and secondary. I think it's very unfortunate that that information isn't available here today, because there were at least a couple of times where we stopped where the staff indicated that probably would be available. The undertaking was to come back today, and it hasn't been provided.

Just for the record then, I would like to identify specifically. I refer to—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, if I can just answer the question—

**Mr Kennedy:** I haven't asked the question, Minister. I just want you to bear with me because I do hope that this information is forthcoming and I want to make sure that we do have it clearly and substantially on the record. There is a—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We're quite prepared to put it on the record. Nancy Naylor and Norbert Hartmann are quite prepared to answer questions verbally and put it on the record.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, the reason I'm asking you to let me identify the document in order is that I don't think it's reasonable to take up estimates time for information that should be available to all members of the House in the pursuit of their duties of understanding what education is doing.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And it is.

**Mr Kennedy:** It has been requested. I provided the document last time which showed a breakdown in the expenditures of the ministry, showed the sources of those

expenditures, showed the operating grants and so on. It was available up to 1997. I had asked specifically for that to be available today, and the undertaking I had was that it could be. We haven't seen that, so I want that on the record. If there's a further undertaking today, I'd be happy to have that because it could be useful in future.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Sure. I'll ask staff where that is. I wasn't aware that it was supposed to be here today, but I repeat, we're quite prepared for staff to discuss it.

I think it's also appropriate though, because there are many people who like to read the Hansard, which is a public record, that I have a staffer here available to answer questions on that data, to provide that data, to talk about it so it is on the record for people. I think that also is appropriate but we'll certainly follow up with any outstanding requests that may not have been met.

**Mr Kennedy:** So the multi-year review is specifically the table I'm referring to: elementary-secondary statistics broken down by the sources of funding for elementary-secondary spending, breakdown between compensation, but significantly, breakdown between provincial support and property taxes. Again, I provided that document. It goes to 1997, the one I have in my possession, and I'd asked for it to be brought up to date. That has not been provided, but hopefully, it can be in future.

Minister, I'd like to ask you about some specific programs around the funding and I'd like to ask you specifically around the provincial schools. They were reported in estimates in 1998-99, and they're not reported this year. I'm wondering what you can tell us about the expenditure on provincial schools. Last year, in 1998-99 estimates, they were marked to go down from the actuals of that year from some \$3 million. I'm wondering what you can tell us about their expenditure this year, is there a specific number, and whether the expenditures were indeed cut as the fiscal plan was last year.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For the provincial schools?

**Mr Kennedy:** Provincial schools, yes.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, the deputy is just obtaining that information and —

**Mr Kennedy:** While we're doing that, can I ask you about provincial schools? As I think most people know, provincial schools provide for some of the neediest children in the province, as a last resort, I guess that has really been the direction, in terms of students who can't be accommodated within the regular school system. Are there any changes planned with provincial schools for this or next fiscal year that are substantive? And while we're waiting for the actual figures, do you have program changes or purpose changes in mind for provincial schools, or can those parents out there who have children in those schools, and others who depend on them as resources, depend on them continuing for the next couple of years as they are today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, this is a service that we provide. It's important. There are no proposals to reduce the expenditures on those services. If there are improvements in the way those services are provided, we're always prepared to look at that, but there is no plan for

the ministry to cease providing those services to those students. They need those services and there is no plan to reduce the amount of money that supports those services.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Minister. Was there a figure available for—

**Ms Suzanne Herbert:** Yes. If I could, it's Suzanne Herbert, the deputy minister. First of all, I just might explain. In the estimates, the provincial schools are directly operated by the ministry, so those figures appear in the ministry's salaries and wages line. That's why you don't see them separately as you would a transfer payment. They are in our estimates book but they are part of the general salaries and wages.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's just that for the last five years, as you know, they have been reported separately, because they do attract some special attention and concern. I'm just asking if you could give me the total expenditure for them.

**Ms Herbert:** Yes, I can. I'll start in 1997-98, if I might, and give you three-year figures.

**Mr Kennedy:** Do you have 1998-99 interim actuals?

**Ms Herbert:** For 1998-99: \$5,239,400. And 1999-2000 projected?

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes.

**Ms Herbert:** That's \$5,319,300.

**Mr Kennedy:** And maybe if you wouldn't mind, 1997-98, the actual that you show.

**Ms Herbert:** That's \$5,102,600.

**Mr Kennedy:** All right, thank you.

Minister, I'd also like to ask you about your intentions in terms of adult education. When we look at the comparable records—and regrettably the records that we discussed last time haven't been made available, but there are some equivalencies, and I'm citing A Report on School Board Spending 1995 to 1996. Looking at that and comparing it to recent figures, it looks as though adult education and continuing education is where a good amount of the cuts have come from. Some \$43 million seems to have been cut from that line item.

I just want to ask your views on continuing and adult education, particularly adult day schools, whether that funding is reasonably secure. We don't have ministry figures but I'm citing the amount of money that was quoted in the ministry document, and also the document that is available to us today shows about a \$43-million cut. Are there further cuts in mind for adult education and continuing education?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have made commitments to funding adult education. I think Nancy Naylor, who is here at the table, can walk you through any specific numbers or questions in terms of what has happened on adult ed.

**Ms Nancy Naylor:** I'm Nancy Naylor, the director of the adult education finance branch. On adult education, we do provide funding for boards, depending on the level of enrolment that they actually offer and attract for their adult ed and continuing ed program. We provide a figure of \$2,257 on a full-time equivalent basis and we provide additional funding if those students happen to be enrolled

in a day school program, on the assumption that they will require some additional funding for their pupil accommodation costs because they're often not able to use schools and infrastructures that are available for evening programs.

**Mr Kennedy:** How much less is that than the amount that was given for day schools two years ago, on a per capita basis as you outlined?

**Ms Naylor:** That figure is the same in the old funding model and in the new funding model, that figure of \$2,257.

**Mr Kennedy:** No, but the amount for the day school differential was changed. How much was that previously and how much is it now?

**Ms Naylor:** That figure has been in place for several years. It didn't change with the introduction of the new funding model, the adult day school. The only thing that did change in the adult day school was that we did begin to recognize school operations and school renewal funding being available, as well as the basic educational program costs.

**Mr Kennedy:** So you're saying there has been no reduction in the ministry's funding of adult education?

**Ms Naylor:** There's been no reduction in the rate we provide for full-time equivalent between the old funding model and the new funding model.

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**Mr Kennedy:** I'm asking, for the life of this government, in the last four to five years, have there been reductions in the amount of money provided for adult education?

**Ms Naylor:** Over the life of—I'm sorry, I'm not sure what you mean.

**Mr Kennedy:** With this government, in the last four years, since education reforms have begun, has there been a reduction?

**Ms Naylor:** There was a change in 1996 around the funding for adult day schools. There was a clarification of which students were funded as secondary students and which students were funded as adult or continuing education.

**Mr Kennedy:** For the record, could you indicate the difference in those, the amounts available as secondary students and the amount available as a continuing ed student?

**Ms Naylor:** I don't know off the top of my head what the basic per-pupil amount was in those years.

**Mr Kennedy:** Approximately would be fine.

**Ms Naylor:** I would have to go back to those regulations.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I don't think it's appropriate for the record that we should be guessing on these numbers. We can certainly take a look at that.

**Mr Kennedy:** If someone could provide that before the end of today, I'd be very appreciative.

**Ms Naylor:** What was introduced at that time really was improved consistency in terms of how adult students were funded, regardless of whether they were supported in adult day or continuing ed, because the programs were



very similar and the cost structures were very similar, so that's what was carried forward into the new funding model.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate that opinion, Ms Naylor, but in my riding of York South at that time, it caused, according to the local school boards, some 800 people to no longer be funded for adult education because they couldn't afford the cost structure you offered. So obviously there's a variance on that.

I think it would be better for the record if we had the variance that was available to boards, because your own figures show, and I'll have to cite these figures in the absence of others, that in 1995-96, adult and continuing education expenditures by the boards was about \$190 million, and that went down to \$147 million in the last completed fiscal year, 1998-99, so a significant drop in the amount of money available to the boards for that purpose.

**Ms Naylor:** What I would say in response to that, Mr Kennedy, is that if you look at the documents that were tabled by the government when they released the new funding model, the government did make available the same amount of money for adult education, and it was a higher figure. During the course of the 1998-99 school year we saw a number of boards restructure their programs, and the actual take-up on that grant did result in a slightly lower expenditure level, but the amount of funding and the availability of that funding was the same.

**Mr Kennedy:** But the amount of money had already been cut from 1995-96, so by the time the new funding formula came into place, it was only consolidating the old level of expenditure. Unless, again, there are some other figures that contrast this, it looks like it's about \$43 million, or approximately 25% less than the original figure spent in 1995-96. Is there any response to that?

**Ms Naylor:** I think what we can do is take a look at the figures and—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to move on, then. Thank you.

Minister, there was large concern—I know your statements in the House were fairly unequivocal, but I'd like to explore mitigation funds for the boards. They are now one element of adjustment that didn't exist to the fullest extent before a change the government made last year. They were extended for some of the boards, and those boards, we'll find as we discuss later, are some of the boards feeling the most pressure. Is there any risk at all that mitigation funds will be changed, either in their terms or in their amounts from that which has been promised, for example, to the Toronto and Ottawa boards, who have them occurring over five years?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Your NDP colleague beat you to the punch on this question.

There have been a number of financial steps taken to help support boards through the transition. Some of those amounts were specifically for certain time periods, for certain years, and that's been very clear. Where we go next year and the year after and the year after that, we obviously will be making those decisions as part of our budget process, and that's not a new process. But as to

some of the restructuring and mitigation monies that boards received, there are time limits on that and they knew that at the time. Where we'll be next year in terms of what the grant will be, those decisions we're looking at now. Again, this process is no different this year than it has been for all the years on education. Every year there's a process they go through for grants.

**Mr Kennedy:** With respect, Minister, what is different is that these boards are being asked to slash a significant amount of money from their budgets, and what you've done is you've backfilled them a little bit of that money, some of that money, and you've given them a schedule under which they can depend on that money. All I'm asking you to affirm—because if you're leaving open the prospect that you could provide more support, that would be terrific, but I don't hear you saying that specifically. What I'm asking you specifically is, will that backfilling, that money you're allowing to exist as mitigation funds, be available on the calendar you've promised, and there will be no changes to that, no reduction in that over the foreseeable future?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm not aware of any changes to that. We have been very clear in terms of the commitments we've made. Where we'll be next year or the year after that or whatever in terms of the grants, certainly as the enrolment grows, the monies grow with enrolment. But I'm not aware of any policy changes around mitigation, restructuring funds that change the way they've been originally put out there.

**Mr Kennedy:** You're the minister. So there are no changes you would make to those arrangements over the next couple of years. Is it fair to say that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, as you know, every year we go through a process with school boards, with all the transfer partners, in terms of what monies will be made available. That is no different than under your government or the previous government, the NDP. There were monies put out to boards with certain time lines on them. As to the time lines and those monies, there has been no decision made to change that but I certainly would not wish to speculate about what may occur in terms of the usual process about the monies boards get from year to year.

**Mr Kennedy:** That is your right, Minister. It's just that I think you missed an opportunity there to assure the boards that the long-term cuts, which you've already told them are not negotiable, are going to be mitigated by a long-term commitment. You said you haven't planned to change it but you haven't guaranteed that it will be there. That's what they need. The planning is their biggest challenge.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But Mr Kennedy, the whole point of the way we fund education now is so they can plan.

**Mr Kennedy:** They can't plan unless you guarantee those mitigation funds; they cannot plan.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, mitigation funds are there for specific purposes. It's for specific projects, for specific transitions, things that boards are going through.

That money was put there for those purposes with particular time lines.

**Mr Kennedy:** And those time lines will be respected, is all I've asked.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Those have not changed, as I've said for the 500th time. I understand what you're trying to do here—

**Mr Kennedy:** Not at all. Minister, you have an opportunity to give whatever assurance you like.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —but we've put in more ability for boards to plan than they've had in the past, quite frankly, and it is something that boards and the Education Improvement Commission have said is a good thing about the changes we've made and how we finance education.

**Mr Kennedy:** That's fine. I'm not sure they're cherishing the plans, at least 25 of the boards having to cut their budgets next year, but I appreciate your point.

On page 25 of the 1998 Ontario budget, your government made a promise for \$130 million to connect schools to the Internet. I'm wondering if you're able to provide us with the exact status. How much of that \$130 million has been spent? How much will be spent this fiscal year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's my understanding that only approximately \$5 million has been spent to date. There's a fair degree of work that is needed to make that particular initiative happen because of all the other things boards have been doing, as you will appreciate. There have been a number of changes, and one of the messages we've certainly heard from our partners in the boards was that there were only so many things we could all accomplish, so that is an initiative that is not yet complete.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** First of all, before I get into questions, I'd ask whoever within your ministry can provide the answer—they don't have to do it this minute but they can start looking up the numbers—how much do we actually spend on special-needs education today? That's something I'd like to have, and if we can get a bit of a breakdown, where we've gone.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We've got a number here we'll get in the next minute or two.

**Mr Bisson:** I'll come back to that in a minute. I just want to get into that.

I left off earlier. For the Chair of the committee, I find myself at a bit of a disadvantage here because there are a number of questions I'd like to be able to pose in French, because they were put to me in French by school boards within my communities, the communities I represent, and unfortunately we don't have translation services here. It puts me at a bit of a loss. I know if I start speaking to the minister in French, she ain't going to be able to hear me. I'm wondering if there are translation services available.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You have an advantage over the rest of us and that includes the bilingual—

**Mr Bisson:** With all due respect, Chair, if we can get an answer. You missed the point, Wayne.

1700

**The Vice-Chair:** If we were in room 151 we could have done so because it has translation. This room hasn't got it. It's unfortunate and it would have been right if all

committees were available in both languages because of official languages.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We do, Mr Bisson. I appreciate the purpose of the question, and my apologies for not being able to take your question in French.

**Mr Bisson:** It's not your fault.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We do have our ADM, Maurice Proulx.

**M. Bisson:** Tu parles le français?

**M. Maurice Proulx:** Absolument.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, he can. So we could certainly do that if you'd like, and any translation that would need to be done, if that would meet your needs.

**Mr Bisson:** OK.

**The Vice-Chair:** I should just caution you that you may put the Chairman at a disadvantage at that time, which is his.

**Mr Bisson:** I can assure you, Mr Chair, I will not do anything to take jabs at anybody.

Une couple de questions : comme on a parlé un peu plus tôt, on a dans nos communautés à travers le nord, puis j'imagine que c'est de même pour beaucoup de députés conservateurs et autres dans les comtés ruraux, des écoles locales.

Pour le record, on a commencé cette discussion un peu plus tôt dans l'autre tour que j'ai eu il y a juste une vingtaine de minutes, et on a eu la chance d'en discuter un peu avec la ministre : c'est la question de l'importance des écoles dans les petites communautés comme Opasatika, Val Rita et autres. On avait dit comment, selon les formules de financement qu'on a présentement, on est dans la situation que les formules de financement mettent les petites écoles, qui ne sont pas pleines, dans des petites communautés dans un désavantage quant ça vient à garder les écoles ouvertes.

Je vais vous donner un exemple. Dans la communauté d'Opasatika, on a une école qui est remplie d'environ 50 % des élèves. Je vais prendre un chiffre. S'il y a 100 places dans l'école, il y a possiblement 50 élèves.

Dans la communauté de Val Rita, qui est à environ 40 kilomètres plus loin, on a encore la même situation. Il y a présentement des discussions dans le conseil scolaire d'être capable d'emmener ensemble ces élèves dans une école. Ils ont commencé le processus de discussions pour voir s'il y a une possibilité de transférer les élèves d'Opasatika et les mettre directement dans l'école à Val Rita.

Je veux mettre sur le record que c'est quelque chose qui n'est pas acceptable. À Opasatika, comme vous le savez, madame la Ministre, il y a seulement une école. Ce n'est pas comme être à Timmins, ou à Kapuskasing, ou à North Bay, ou à Toronto, où on transfère les élèves d'un bord de la rue à l'autre.

Dans la situation d'Opasatika, ça veut dire que ces élèves, et on parle des petits élèves de la prématernelle jusqu'à la sixième année, je pense, parce que les grades 7 et 8 sont déjà transportés hors de la communauté, on parle des jeunes en bas de l'âge de 10 ans, de les mettre sur un autobus, de les envoyer à Val Rita et de les



retransporter à la fin de la journée. Je vous dis que la communauté a pas mal peur présentement de ce que ça veut dire pour leurs élèves, premièrement, sur la sécurité sur les routes et, deuxièmement—puis je vais vous donner une chance de répondre—c'est toute la question de ce que ça veut dire pour la communauté.

La municipalité me dit : « Si nous, on perd notre école, ça veut dire que les résidents futurs qui pourraient venir s'établir à Opatatika ne vont pas venir parce qu'il n'y a pas d'école. » S'ils perdent eux autres l'école, ça enlève beaucoup à l'aspect de la communauté d'être capable d'attirer des nouveaux résidents parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas leur offrir une école pour les petits de ces familles.

J'aimerais avoir une réponse à ce qu'on s'attend du ministère d'être capable de donner le support nécessaire aux écoles comme celle à Opatatika.

**Mr Proulx :** I'm Maurice Proulx, ADM, French-language education and educational operations.

La question que vous soulevez concernant les communautés qui n'ont qu'une seule école en est une qui est préoccupante, je pense, à travers la province pour toutes les communautés rurales. Dans la formule de financement, il est à noter qu'il y a des fonds qui sont alloués pour les petites écoles pour permettre aux conseils scolaires d'opérer les petites écoles malgré le fait que les nombres soient plus petits.

La formule de financement, c'est qu'on prend également un montant pour opérer des écoles en milieu rural ou en milieu éloigné, parce qu'effectivement on cherche à pouvoir maintenir ces écoles-là.

Il est à rappeler également, en date de l'automne de l'an dernier, une modification qui a été apportée à la formule de calcul pour les places-élèves qui permet aux conseils d'opérer une école jusqu'à raison de 80 % de sa capacité puis, d'être financée pour 100 % de sa capacité. Cela est également une autre mesure qui aide aux conseils à pouvoir opérer les petites écoles sans aider strictement en fonction de si c'est une école qui était en milieu urbain, par exemple, et pouvoir la garder.

**M. Bisson :** Vois-tu, la question qui dérive pour une communauté comme Opatatika, c'est qu'on est déjà dans une situation où on a transporté les 7 et 8 hors de la communauté, et là on se trouve dans cette école qui est je pense de 50 % à 55 % pleine. Ils me disent, eux autres, que la formule de 80 % les désavantage parce qu'ils ont déjà transféré un bon pourcentage d'élèves en 7<sup>e</sup> et 8<sup>e</sup> à Val Rita, et tout le secondaire est à Kapuskasing, alors ils n'ont pas les élèves nécessaires pour acheminer le 80 %. Ce qu'ils demandent, c'est s'il y a de l'ouvrage qui va être fait sur la formule de financement pour regarder le numéro de 80 % pour l'abaisser, pour être capable d'allouer aux communautés comme Opatatika afin de garder leur école ou de rapatrier les élèves, possiblement, des 7<sup>e</sup> et 8<sup>e</sup> pour les ramener, pour accomplir le 80 %. « L'un ou l'autre, on va arriver à la même affaire.

**M. Proulx :** Toute la question de la formule de financement, comme vous le savez, est à l'étude et puis

on cherche toujours des moyens d'améliorer la formule de financement telle qu'elle existe.

En bout de ligne, il faut penser également que les conseils ont une responsabilité de regarder les besoins de tous les élèves à travers le conseil pour offrir le meilleur service puis, ultimement, ce sont des décisions que les conseils doivent prendre concernant l'ouverture de nouvelles écoles ou la fermeture d'écoles.

Mais, certainement au niveau de la formule de financement on cherche à donner aux conseils la flexibilité nécessaire pour maintenir les petites écoles.

**M. Bisson :** En bas du 80 %?

**M. Proulx :** La question de pourcentage, c'est clair que cette mesure-là a aidé les conseils à savoir s'il y aurait une autre modification à apporter. Je ne serais pas en mesure, aujourd'hui, de vous l'indiquer.

**M. Bisson :** Je veux vous dire, le directeur responsable pour cet aspect, que vous comprenez mon point. Si on n'a pas ces écoles dans les communautés, puis c'est la même affaire pour beaucoup de membres conservateurs dans leurs comtés où il y a des petites communautés—il y a seulement une autre école, il n'y a pas autre chose dans la communauté que l'école et l'église dans beaucoup d'exemples, comme Opatatika et d'autres communautés—s'ils perdent l'école, ça ôte l'habileté d'attirer de nouvelles familles dans les communautés, ce qui veut dire que c'est un peu la mort de la communauté sur une période de temps. C'est très important qu'on trouve des solutions pour être capable de garder ces écoles en place. Oui, ça veut dire que c'est plus cher, mais des fois il faut regarder ce que ça veut dire pour ces communautés.

**M. Proulx :** Oui, puis je pense que ultimement, c'est la raison d'être derrière l'octroi petites écoles, pour permettre, justement, le maintien des petites écoles. C'est certainement l'un des résultats de cette facette de la formule de financement.

**Mr Bisson :** To the members, unfortunately we don't have translation service in this room. Many of you have the same problem in your own ridings as Conservatives where you represent rural ridings. You have schools in some of your communities, I'm sure the same as ours, where there's only one school and the nearest school is 30, 40 miles away. If they close the school because of the funding formula, there's an 80% factor, there's a special part of the formula that says if you have a school that's not filled but is within 80% of being filled, there's a special funding arrangement to keep the school open. Some schools fall below that mark. If a school ends up closing, it means that first of all those kids have to be transported fairly great distances to go to school. As parents I'm sure you feel as I do, and this is not a partisan issue. My kids are older now. One is in university and the other one is about to go, but I didn't want my kids to be transported, and I'm sure that nobody else would want to transport their kids, on highways farther than we have to.

The other issue is an economic development issue. If you lose a school in a small town, it's very difficult to attract new families into that community. I think we need

to look at that. Yes, it might be a little bit more expensive, I say to the government members, to operate a school in a community like that, but for the community it's very important. I think we need to take that into consideration when we're coming up with our funding formulas. Maybe the minister wants to comment.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I—

**Mr Bisson:** And I didn't say a bad word about any of you in all of that, and I understood it in both languages. Did you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We know we can trust him on this.

You raised some very valid points. The ministry is quite aware of the significance of this issue in smaller communities, whether in the north or in rural communities. We've certainly taken steps in the past to provide more financial assistance for boards that are faced with that. We understand we have a challenge in front of us in terms of how much further we can go. I hear the concern and it's one we are looking at in terms of what we can do. I appreciate your point.

1710

**Mr Bisson:** Before we go to the issue that I first raised around the funding for special needs, I want once again to put the pitch, because I don't think I got an answer last time. I think it's because we didn't have enough time. I'm sure you wish to give the proper answer. That was the issue of the teacherage grant—I forget the exact term—for the James Bay Lowlands school board and other schools up at James Bay. Just for members who may not have been here last week to know, they used to attract teachers to the schools at James Bay by offering accommodation, because it's very hard to get accommodation in communities like Moosonee or Attawapiskat or Fort Albany because there's no housing available.

You've got families where one house basically houses 18 or 20 people. It's very difficult for a kid to learn in that kind of environment, very difficult for families to function. There is no space in those communities. What the school boards would do is they would get a portable or build a house or whatever it would be, or rent space from the band, to offer accommodation to the new teacher coming into the community. They would also subsidize that unit so that it was a financial attraction to get the teacher up there.

The teacher said, "I get my salary the same as I would anywhere else, but I get cheaper accommodation; there is the draw to get me in." That program is being phased out, as you well know. It's becoming very difficult, first, to keep teachers there because there's no place for them to stay. I visited one of the apartment units in Moose Factory and I don't think any of us would be very comfortable in the particular one I saw, not in very good shape. Who wants to live in that kind of unit? Basically there's no money to upgrade, to fix, to do the things that need to be done. Second, it's hard to keep them there, but very difficult to attract them because now there are no longer any subsidies to offset the accommodation. The accommodation is very expensive.

School boards are finding themselves at a disadvantage to attract teachers to the community. There was a letter. I told you I would give you a copy. I have it here. It was addressed to the assistant deputy minister from John McMartin, the superintendent of education. It lists this issue. I wonder, for the record, if you can tell us if there's any attempt to address the issue he raises around this teachers' program.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You're quite right. It's a significant issue for smaller communities in the north. We have the October 12 letter to Norbert Hartmann. Thank you for raising it. It was replied to; Norbert responded on November 22. We are looking at the funding model. We are looking at the impact on communities, especially on this particular issue. That is part of the discussion we are having about where we go from here.

**Mr Bisson:** Could we anticipate a positive move in this direction?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I can't prejudge where we'll be on a number of issues affecting the grant rate next year. This is certainly one. We've had good feedback from your community on the importance of this. It is an issue where we are looking at what we can do to deal with it.

**Mr Bisson:** I'm sure the minister understands well the importance of this not only to the teachers but to the kids and the families. It's very hard to keep a system of education going without teachers.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I understand that.

**Mr Bisson:** The issues are quite different on James Bay. I think you recognize that. I would offer a visit to any of the members of the committee from the government side, and to the minister. If you want to come up, I will arrange to bring you up. I think you'll get a real education about what happens in those communities, the lack of services.

It's not all your doing. I'm not going to sit here and cast stones at the Conservatives, because the federal government dropped the ball on this years ago. We need to figure out, as a province, how we make sure that kids and families and people individually up there get the same kind of services as we get in other communities. I'll even fly you myself.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You had me going there for a while until that last comment.

**Mr Bisson:** I'm a qualified pilot. I've got an aircraft. I'll fly you up. It won't cost you anything.

**Mr O'Toole:** Who pays? I thought the federal government would pay. I thought the first nations came under the federal government.

**Mr Bisson:** We have provincially run schools at James Bay. There are some federal dollars in regard to the band in Moose Factory, the Dolores Echum school. But there are a number of schools that are paid by the province, as well as hospitals and a number of other services.

**Mr O'Toole:** Do we pay the whole bill?

**Mr Bisson:** No, just part.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate the honourable member's invitation. We have responded to Mr McMartin's letter.

**Mr Bisson:** You were going to add something?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes. On special education, we spend \$1.2 billion for special ed and that is the most that any Ontario government has ever spent. That money is split roughly into two pots, if you will, what they call the ISA grant, which is the monies that go to the higher needs children, and also what is called the SEPPA grant which is money that is provided to boards in a much more flexible fashion. It is important to note that special education was increased last year by \$127 million and again this year by \$32.5 million. There are considerable monies there. It has increased. We've also been hearing input from the boards about future changes that may be necessary in this to better meet the needs of special education students.

**Mr Bisson:** I want to raise one issue. I think I've only got about four or five minutes left.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's rather generous. You've got two minutes.

**Mr Bisson:** I want to raise an issue that's really important. It's something that I imagine the Conservative members have heard as well. Funding for special needs is always based on your enrolment the year before, as I understand it. School boards are telling me they're quite concerned about that because their needs change from year to year.

What ends up happening is that if, let's say, last year you had 10 kids who needed special needs education, and for whatever reason—demographic change in your community—you end up with 15 kids, you're funding is based on what you had last year. They're finding that quite stifling in some areas. It puts them in a situation where, I'm being told—I don't have this documented so I'm not going to make allegations—there are kids in our community who are going without special needs education because of the way the funding is set up. It may not be an issue of the dollars that we have in but that we're basing it always on last year's numbers.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's an important question. It's based on current enrolment. There's no question that we are in a transition. That is why there were additional monies provided to boards this year this year under what we call the SEPPA grant, which is much more flexible, so that they could use it for high-needs children if they wanted to support additional high-needs children. That's why it was put out there for the boards. It is based on current enrolment. I think that's an important point.

**Mr Bisson:** With respect, I don't discount what the government is trying to do in special needs education. It's been a problem that has plagued every government: my government, yours and the Liberals before that. None of us have got it right. We need to try to do something to address it. It seems to me, just looking from the outside, that I'm getting a lot more calls from parents to our constituency offices these days about their kids not getting the kind of special-needs education they need.

That's always been a problem, but it seems to be getting a lot worse. I'm being told by the school boards that part of the problem is the way we do the funding, based on last year's funding. I haven't done enough research on this. I might be a little bit off. I'm afraid to go out on a limb here. We need to take a better look at this.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's a very valid point. We are looking at it. We knew and we said very clearly to boards that, because of the importance and the sensitivity of special education funding as we moved into a new way to support, both policy and dollar-wise, we wanted to be very careful that boards were not experiencing big decreases or increases, that we weren't getting big swings in money.

They got more money in the two years. Last year and this year, there was more money than what they had the previous year to help them change to a new way of financing special education. We understand that, for some boards, they've never had so much money in their special education budget. For other boards, it has been a change. Some boards have told me that they used to use money for high-needs students to finance other students. We have said, "No, high-needs dollars are for high-needs children." There's no question there are some restrictions. If we're giving them a dollar for a high-needs child, that's where that dollar should go.

The other reason that almost half of the special education grant to the boards is done in a flexible way is that this was to respond to their need for flexible money as well. We are looking at how we can improve this, and I think it is fair to say that if there were any simple answers here, we would have done it yesterday. On the one hand, I'm hearing from boards that they want more flexibility—"Give us more flexibility." On the other hand, I'm hearing from parents that they don't trust the boards, rightly or wrongly, with more flexibility; they want more restrictions on the dollars.

1720

**Mr Bisson:** They want provincial guidance too.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There is.

**Mr Bisson:** They want more provincial guidelines.

Just on a point of order, on a separate matter, Mr Chair. I'm not going to take long. In regard to the French-language issue and translation, maybe it would be appropriate at one point to have a bit of discussion at estimates about how we can deal with that, because I find myself in a situation where I'm going to raise them in French, but it puts you members who don't understand French at the disadvantage of not knowing what it is I'm talking about. We need to provide some form of translation at estimates to be able to deal with this more adequately than we did today.

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes. Under these circumstances, if we knew ahead of time, we could have made this kind of provision. I think your point is well taken.

**Mr Bisson:** I just want to put the committee on notice that I'm the regular member at estimates and I will be raising, at most of the meetings, a number of issues in

French, and I think we need to provide translation services for other members.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's good to know. But I know we're going to suspend ourselves at about the second of this month—

**M. Bisson :** Si je parle lentement, vous allez comprendre? Vous êtes Monsieur Un?

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Thank you, Mr Chair. Stewart's my name; I won't tell you my game.

Before I ask a couple of questions, Norbert was talking about the various grants and so on and so forth, I realize they're all in this book. Is there a document that lays out what both the province and the municipalities are putting into each particular grant that we're giving to the boards? We keep hearing, and you have said, Minister, today that we're putting more money here and more money there and more money elsewhere. Is there a simple way that we can get something that allows us to look at it at a glance and see the kind of dollars that are being increased and the various categories they're in, because I heard about some grants today from Norbert that I don't know whether I totally understand. Is that a possibility?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, it is, Mr Stewart. Good question. I am taking the ministry's word that we're making this more simple than it was before and—

**Mr Stewart:** I'm a simple kind of a guy.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, I know. I must confess, when I've had briefings, they sort of talked to me about the way it was and the way it is now. I think we are heading in the right direction towards a simpler, more equitable formula, one that is more based on students, on classroom, and one that is more transparent. There are documents that list what boards are getting and we can make those available to you.

The other point I should make is that next year boards will be filing, for lack of a better term, what I would describe as financial report cards, which will give us an even better sense of where the dollars are going so that we can all, taxpayers, parents and everyone, track that.

**Mr Stewart:** Might we get this new, compiled, one-page, whatever it might be, in the next few weeks?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We could certainly get that to you, I would think, fairly quickly.

**Mr Stewart:** I think all caucuses might be—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly.

**Mr Stewart:** I've got a couple of questions. One, of course, relates to the new curriculum. Certainly there are those in our society who support it; there are those who don't support it. I'm a great believer in the four R's. The latter one, respect, is as important as the others. Times have changed and technology is changing. It used to be that everything was geared, I believe, to your becoming either a doctor, a lawyer or a teacher. I think that there are a lot of other professions out there in a lot of other areas that need to have students coming out of school, trained to be able to go into various programs, whether they be apprenticeship programs or whatever, that they can learn those particular trades.

I guess my question to you is that certainly the curriculum has changed. How do you feel it has made improvements over what we had before?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Very good question. I think one of the most significant changes has been the improvement in curriculum. Even people like Marshall Jarvis who, as you know, used to head the Catholic teachers' federation, not known for his support of this government, has said that it is a "good curriculum," that "the government has moved in the right direction," the "curriculum gives our students the opportunity to achieve very favourable results."

Maret Sädem-Thompson, whom Mr O'Toole may well remember since we were all on platforms together some years ago, described the elementary curriculum, for example, as an "excellent document," that "it's good for children," the science curriculum and math and all of those things are good, particularly for kindergarten students as well. The quotes go on and on in terms of our curriculum. I did not realize how significant, far reaching and good, if I may say, our changes had been in the curriculum until I got more detailed briefing as minister.

First of all, this is the first comprehensive change in curriculum since Egerton Ryerson, back in the 1850s, designed the public school system. For the first time, the curriculum is being built from kindergarten right through to grade 12 so that every year what a child learns in one year is built on the knowledge they were to acquire the year before. The curriculum was never designed that way before. That allows materials, training, textbooks, all to be written in support of that specific curriculum. That, I think, is a significant change and a significant improvement.

It is more rigorous. It does have clear expectations about what children are expected to learn and to know. Curriculum guidance from past governments was very vague and not consistently applied. When you look at these skimpy, little documents that came out before and compare that to the documents that we're putting out, you can see that there are many more expectations that are much clearer and more rigorous. It's also results-oriented so that the testing that we've brought in is clearly going to be showing us whether these children are acquiring the knowledge and skills that they need. That's another important change.

The other point again, as Mr Stewart said, and I think it's quite valid, is that unfortunately the system had tended to lean towards those who were perhaps going to university. When you look at the majority of our students who leave high school, they do not go on to university. They go on to many other good and productive things, either directly into the workforce, into apprenticeship and training, into colleges—there's a number of different destinations. The secondary school curriculum which is being phased in now—it started in grade 9 this year, grade 10 next year and on through—is based on the destination of that student. If they're going to go to university or college, if they're going to go directly into the workforce or apprenticeship or training courses, they



can take courses that are geared to getting them there. It's very clear what they are. They know what they need to learn.

The other point that I think is really important for parents and for students—because we all remember, I think, how tough it was back there in grade 9 trying to decide what we were going to do with our life—is that it also recognizes that students need the flexibility to change so that if they start off in one stream and they find that's not appropriate for them, they want to go into a different kind of destination, the curriculum is designed to help them make that shift, which again is another important change.

We have here four examples. Take a look at this little document called *The Formative Years*. It was put out in 1975, and this was the elementary book. That's it. It's only a couple of pages, 20 pages; that's it. For those of you who may remember and it's too bad we're still not on TV, the elementary curriculum now is this high in terms of the expectations. So it's an important change. It is allowing us to give our students more of what they need.

We are also helping teachers in a way that the provincial government had never done. Usually you would just take a document such as this, send it out, send it to the boards, and say: "Here it is. Have a nice day." What we're now doing is to ensure that the curriculum is put in place in a consistent way across the province. We have what we call course profiles and exemplars like sample lessons for teachers. We have examples of how to assess a student. We have things like CDs and training courses and summer institutes. There are literally millions of dollars that we have spent, not only to provide materials for the new curriculum but also to help teachers learn how to teach the new curriculum because it is certainly a change for them as well. They are having to teach more rigorous material and we are prepared to take and have been taking steps to support them in doing that.

1730

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you. Mr Chair, I want to compliment you on the way you've been handling this meeting. You've done very, very well. I think you should get some of the extra stipend that goes to the Chair because you sit in here so often, but that's just my opinion.

**The Vice-Chair:** Very supportive of you.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I know you would. As to why the hearing is not being conducted on television today, I accept full blame for that. We could have done so.

In my riding, for the last umpteen months there have challenges, there have been accomplishments, and we've had compliments and we've had criticisms. Our critics have concerns—some valid, some not so valid. Our supporters have some concerns. We've had so many accomplishments in the past few years, but there still is so much to be done. I wonder if you could give us some idea what the priorities will be for your ministry for the coming 12 months.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There's no question that there have been considerable changes in the last four years, and I guess my first priority as Minister of Education, first of several but one of the first ones, is to finish what we started, finish the phasing-in of the new curriculum, as I mentioned. Grade 9 has just started; we have 10, 11 and 12 to go through. We want to get that in place and we want to continue the expansion of testing to make sure that we are indeed giving our students what they need to have. That's one important priority: finishing the curriculum changes and constantly looking at how we can continue to improve the way it's being taught and the outcomes we're getting.

The second piece of finishing what we started is to make appropriate changes where required in how we finance and fund education—you've heard me talk in this forum about special education, for example—so we're looking at ways we may need to change how we fund education to better meet the needs of students. That's in the finishing what we started category.

In doing what we said we would do during this mandate category, there are several things but I think the two most important priorities would be getting more respect and responsibility in the school system, so that students and teachers are safe, and also so that students know what behaviour is expected of them and get taught the values of good citizenship.

One of the initiatives to achieve this will be a code of conduct where there will be clear behavioural expectations for students. As to those who are doing things like bringing alcohol or drugs to school, or harassing or swearing or assaulting teachers, there would be clear and tough penalties for that kind of behaviour.

We quite recognize that students can't learn and teachers can't teach if they're not safe in a classroom. As a layperson, if you will, I've been quite shocked at some of the stories I've heard from parents, students and teachers about some of the lack of safety, or some of the violence even, that has occurred in some schools, unfortunately, across the province. So that's one very important initiative.

The second one is to have an appropriate teacher testing program. As I've said earlier and on many occasions, testing students, for example, testing boards in terms of how they are spending the money, that's the way we ask the tough question, are we doing the job we need to do? Testing gives us results that we can say: "Is there a problem? If there is, let's go fix it." So we want to expand into an appropriate testing program for teachers, because excellent teaching is one of the foundations of a good, quality education system. While we have many, many excellent teachers out there, whom I've had myself or that I continue to meet in this particular capacity, we also know that we need to do a better job of ensuring that the profession as a whole can stay up to date, is meeting the increasing challenges teachers are facing. I think an appropriate teacher testing program will allow us to do that.

We have started the consultations on this. We understand that this is a significant step, that there are a great many teachers who feel uncertain about this. This is not an unusual feeling for them, but this is also, as I've said, not a challenge unique to teaching. Many professions are wrestling with how they put in place mechanisms to have their members, both individually and as a group, constantly get better, constantly meet the challenge of new changes, new technology, new learning, new strategies, whether it's healing or teaching.

I have some familiarity with what has been going on in the health sector for the 24 health professions. They have a piece of legislation, the Regulated Health Professions Act, which has a whole section that is a mandatory quality assurance program they are subject to, all the 24 professions, not only doctors and dentists and nurses, but chiropractors, dieticians, chiropodists—all 24 of them.

So the challenge is very similar to many professions. The mechanisms may vary from profession to profession, but the challenge is the same. We want to make sure we can effectively test, evaluate, assess the ability of teachers. I must stress too, because I know a lot of misinformation has gone out on this, that we're not simply talking about measuring knowledge. Knowledge certainly is one component of excellent teaching, as it is of excellent professional service in any area, but simply having knowledge as a teacher doesn't mean you can teach it. We understand that it's not only knowledge that must be tested and assessed, but also abilities, training, all of those factors that make up a very competent teacher.

It is a big challenge, but it is important if we are serious about having the best education system we can have. If there's one thing I think we've proved it is that we are very serious as a government about improving the quality in the education system. This is one mechanism by which we can do that.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's it? No further questions here?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want to ask you about what you just finished saying, alluding to teacher testing. It's just a bit remarkable, and I wonder if you'd like to comment. You and I were both in attendance—I think you were the honoured guest—at the Teacher of the Year awards. At those awards, former Premier Davis seemed to give you an indication that teacher testing should not be done with a paper test. I would agree that he endorsed a lot of other things he felt you as an individual were doing, but I wonder, are you sticking with your plan to have a written test as a component of this teacher testing?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, we never said we would have a written test of any form. Our commitment was to test knowledge, skills, training and abilities. I would be quite happy to give you the wording, not only in Blueprint, but also in press releases and statements that we recognize, and we've said this very clearly from day one, that simply having knowledge doesn't mean a teacher can teach it. Assessing knowledge is a piece of an appropriate testing and evaluation

mechanism, but we also must be measuring skills and abilities. There are many factors that make up a competent teacher. Mr Davis and I, quite frankly, had a good discussion before that speech, and he and I agree.

So we've had no change in our objective, no change in our intent. We have asked, as you know, the College of Teachers for advice. The Ontario Teachers' Federation is providing advice. There are many groups. The Education Quality and Accountability Office also has advice for us on how we can effectively measure these things.

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**Mr Kennedy:** That's seems very unequivocal. So there will be no written component of a test when it's finally realized?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I didn't say that, Mr Kennedy. I said that we have stated what we wish to assess, why it's important to assess those things.

**Mr Kennedy:** Oh, I see. You haven't said it. OK.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Knowledge is part of that and we are seeking advice from all of our education partners as to how we can effectively assess knowledge and the other factors that need to be assessed.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate the clarification, Minister.

I'd like to turn now to the Toronto board and the situation that is facing them over the next number of years. I know there are parents in Toronto specifically who would like to know your ministry's perspective. The Toronto board is looking at significant cuts. They were imposed by your government, and that's why I'm hoping you won't just say, "It's the Toronto board's responsibility and we'll help them if they ask us," and so on. They are saying these are impossible to manage. The EIC has identified some areas that they also agree have to be changed.

What I'm wondering is, do you recognize that some of these challenges go against some of the things that you've been saying here today and in earlier sessions? For example, they are looking at cutting a large number of professionals and paraprofessionals, some \$29 million worth of professionals and paraprofessionals. You know about the huge cuts in teacher preparation time.

I wonder if you would speak to me first about the paraprofessionals that they have to get rid of. Do you think they're surplus now, the various psychiatrists, psychotherapists, child care social workers, attendance counsellors, guidance counsellors, a lot of whom contribute to safety in the school? These are front-line people. I know that attendance counsellors, for example, in the former Etobicoke board are all going to be taken away, and there will be fewer of them replaced, probably less qualified from a teacher perspective but certainly less qualified overall. So can you address the reduction in paraprofessionals? Is there anything you're intending to do to ensure that this doesn't harm the classroom conditions for children?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I'm yet again quite pleased to answer this question. The Toronto board is being asked to live within its budget. The Education Improvement Commission has said there is more work



this board needs to do and has made some recommendations to them about how they can do that. We have expressed our willingness, and the board has agreed. We are working with them to meet these challenges. We have retained the services of an independent management consultant to work with the board who can identify additional opportunities for efficiencies. I think it's important to note that there are many forecasts and many predictions that are out there. That doesn't necessarily mean they will come to pass. I think that's a very important message.

We understand that we will continually need this year, next year, the year after that, for however many years all of us are in this business, to work with the board to make sure they're meeting the challenge of providing quality education. But I would also like to point out that the Education Improvement Commission made some other very relevant recommendations for how the board and—

**Mr Kennedy:** But—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a second. You've asked me an important question. Let me finish. There are other sources of revenue here that the EIC also said needed to be worked on with the board. This is where, for example, the responsibility of the city of Toronto comes in.

**Mr Kennedy:** But, Minister, they're not here—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Some \$15 million—just a minute—

**Mr Kennedy:** But it's subtracting from the time we have for you to answer the question I'm putting to you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Some \$15 million could be there for this board if the city of Toronto and the board could change the way—it's an administrative procedure. So there's a lot of work that needs to be done as we help the Toronto board deliver good quality education within their budget.

**Mr Kennedy:** But, Minister, you now collect all the taxes in Toronto that are for education. You set the mill rate for them and you determine that this board gets \$250 million less. No other outside entity is doing that. There may be other things that could help to mitigate that, but you're the one cannibalizing the Toronto board to the tune of \$250 million.

They've come back and presented proposals that say they're going to lose important services, including paraprofessionals and psychologists and so on, that don't fit within your classroom model. You've had no comment on that.

Now, I wonder, would you comment on the learning opportunities fund? Would you say whether you'll be acting on that? The programs, Minister—and you may well have been in the schools to see that the nutrition supplements, the before- and after-school programs have already been cut in most of the places I've visited in Toronto. Already they've been cut back from five days to four. After-school attendance, because of lack of resources, is in many schools cut in half. These are the programs that are special in Toronto and other urban boards that the EIC said your funding model does not accommodate. I can tell you it's happening now that those children are less supported than they were last year.

Will you take some of the responsibility along the lines the EIC suggested and look at and come to some conclusions about this learning opportunities grant in time for it to have some effect even this school year? Will you do that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, yet again we have said we are certainly looking at not only the learning opportunities grant but how we help support financially the Toronto board in its goal of trying to deliver quality education for our students. So we are quite prepared to look at those recommendations from the EIC, but also the EIC said the board has some steps that it must take. We've lost precious time because of the way things have been conducted with this board in the past—that's according to the EIC—but that's water under the bridge, unfortunately. We are working with the board; we have a management consultant. But you've dismissed very lightly a simple administration change, the way—

**Mr Kennedy:** No, Minister, what I've dismissed is—you're not giving me the answers. Mr Chair—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I know this isn't the answer you want, but you've asked me a question and I'm prepared to answer it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Wasting time is the minister's prerogative, but there are at least—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Just give the minister a few minutes to respond and we can go back to that.

**Mr Kennedy:** If she has the time to reasonably answer the question, I would like to be able to put questions and not have the time wasted.

**The Vice-Chair:** The minister will come to it. Minister?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just as a way to illustrate the work that needs to be done in the next couple of years with the Toronto board is that a simple administration change in terms of how the city of Toronto allocates its monies to the board could give them an additional \$15 million in revenue. So there is a lot of work here that needs to be done and we are working with the board to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** But, Minister, you have had for a number of weeks the EIC report, you've had your own information directly from the Toronto board, and from other boards, I might add, and you seem to have no concrete plans to make changes. You seem to be resolute to stick with what you're doing. I'm wondering why you can't share with us today at least some progress, or, more importantly I think at this stage, some recognition that what the EIC says is not just \$7 million a year wasted but that there's actually something concrete that you're doing about that. Is there something at all that you can share with us today around learning opportunity grants or the funding structure that you're responsible for? Stop pointing fingers at other levels of government, Minister, because you're here to account for your part of this.

Now, will you say what you and your ministry will do about Toronto? If there's something specific, could we hear that? If there isn't, could I move on to another question? It would be unfortunate if there isn't something. I'd

be happy to give you the time if there is something specific.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, no one is pointing fingers at any other level of government here. You keep putting this interpretation on it.

**Mr Kennedy:** You just did, Minister, but that's fine.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what I said, and you clearly were not listening.

Yes, we are looking at how we fund the Toronto board, as we are other boards. Yes, we are looking at the EIC recommendations. Yes, we are trying to determine how we can continue to work with this board; we've already provided them with \$700 million in additional monies to help get them through the challenges they are facing. We have already retained the services of a management consultant to assist. We have taken steps. We provided additional monies to them in terms of accommodation and things last year. We've been quite prepared to work with this board as they go through the challenges, and we've said we are looking at how we finance. There'll be announcements that if there are to be changes in funding we will be quite prepared to make those. But as I said, a lot of work needs to be done and will continue to be done here.

**Mr Kennedy:** But when might you actually have some actions that you're going to take to ameliorate the situation of the board? Do you recognize that the Toronto board will need additional funding and additional assistance in order to do its job, or is that still a question in your mind?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, when will the board finish the steps that they are supposed to take, the recommendations they had from the EIC to find the savings they are supposed to find?

**Mr Kennedy:** The EIC told you that the most important recommendation was your definition and your inadequate funding for—this is the EIC that said this, Minister. The most important recommendation was the learning opportunities grant. That's the most important one.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm just wondering, do you acknowledge that there is a shortage of funding? Do you at least acknowledge that, so that we all know, the people in Toronto know, that the Minister of Education for the province of Ontario is working on this problem, not just talking about it? If you acknowledge the problem, that's at least a step forward. Do you see that there's lack of funds?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I don't know where you've been for the last several weeks. You were at the press conference where the EIC report came out. The EIC has flagged that there may be a gap three years from now—

**Mr Kennedy:** They did not say three years from now, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, you'd better go back and read your report.

**Mr Kennedy:** I have. I have it here.

1750

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Anyway, we understand that the EIC has made recommendations to us, to the board. We are looking at those. We are working at solutions. I don't know how much clearer I can be than that. Anyway, that's what we need to say on this, and if Mr Kennedy wants to go out and twist and misinterpret that, I guess he is certainly free to do it.

**Mr Kennedy:** I gave you the opportunity to answer in a more positive way that would be helpful to the board and to the students, and I don't think it happened. You obviously stand by your answer.

In the ESL programs, particularly, they're looking at a \$37-million reduction over the next two years. At other times, when this has been raised in the Legislature, you've gone on and on about the federal government. You've cut the program. This is your decision specifically, to reduce the amount of money they have available. I want to know, will you be addressing the cuts in ESL from the provincial perspective? This is having a dramatic effect. I can cite you cases today where less ESL instruction is there, and that becomes, like special education, an issue for every student in the school because those students then require time. You know you reduced the formula so that they only get three years of English as a second language. You don't recognize children who may have lived at home and not learned English. There are lots of problems with this formula. Is this somewhere near the top of your priority list? Will this be dealt with? Can you give us any specifics about how you might do so, if you are going to deal with it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, the ESL change is because there's been a decrease in enrolment in the program. I'm sure he would not want us to be paying for services that are not being offered.

Secondly, the Toronto board, because—

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me finish the answer, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** That's just silly, though, Minister, with respect. That's not what's happening.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's a fact.

**Mr Kennedy:** Are you saying the whole reduction is because of reduction in enrolment?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, let me finish my answer here. Because we understand that the Toronto school board faces significant challenges in ESL, that's why they get 42% of all the monies in the province given to ESL services, because we understand that that is indeed a challenge for them. We'd be quite happy to have Nancy Naylor talk about the changes in that and the decline in enrolment, because we'd certainly want to make sure that accurate information is here on the record for the honourable member.

**Mr Kennedy:** Here's what Carla Kisco at the TDSB finance office says. She says that the funding model is only providing—that they are \$117 million short for special needs; a \$37-million reduction in English-as-a-second-language programs and services. You may be



giving 42% of what you're prepared to pay for ESL, but it doesn't relate to what they have always discovered is the need for ESL students. You've cut back, through your criteria, the amount of English-as-a-second-language training you're prepared to offer: only one year full and then two years graduated, where it used to be five to six to seven years, depending on the circumstances, and for a much smaller pool. So they're paying \$37 million. That's what they maintain. You can tell me it's not true, and if so, then you can please provide the figures today in writing that would support that, because that is the contention of the Toronto board and I think it's important that you take that contention seriously.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we do take all of these issues very seriously. Nancy Naylor is here, who has the expertise to talk about what is happening with this particular dollar amount.

**Ms Naylor:** In terms of the ESL funding, the intention is very much to protect that funding as one of the components of special-needs funding going into the new funding model. The grant for that was based on the best possible proxy for the need for ESL funding; that is, the number of students who enrol in a board from a country where English is not a first or standard language. We had been tracking that consistently for a number of years with boards. We ensured that money was available for that, and that is still the basis on which money is available.

A couple of factors: One is that money is provided over the first three years—you're correct—in a graduated way. That's to ensure that the money gets into the board's hands in the first three years a student is enrolled in an Ontario school board and to ensure that they can use that money in as flexible a way as possible to provide the programs that are of assistance to the children.

The second point is that in 1999-2000, we did enrich a component of the grant that's intended to provide funding for Canadian-born students who may enrol in the school board's programs without a working knowledge of English. That funding was doubled in this year.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm sorry, Ms Naylor, could you address for me the contention of the Toronto board that they get \$37 million less than they currently expend as they see fit to improve the educational prospects of the students who need English-as-a-second-language training? Is that accurate?

**Ms Naylor:** That doesn't sound right to me. We'd be happy to analyze any figures they would like to provide to the ministry.

**Mr Kennedy:** Do you know the figures and can you provide them today? In their absence, Ms Naylor—the ministry stands, in my estimation, not accountable unless it does provide us those. These are crucial issues for the ability of the board to function and, frankly, for the ability of Toronto to function.

Does the ministry have those figures? Can they provide them today so we can compare them to the Toronto board's figures, which I have put into the record?

**Ms Naylor:** What we can show you is the amount of money that was projected for the Toronto board in 1998-

99 and 1999-2000, the amount of money that they've claimed. The figures you mentioned are not consistent with our figures, so we'd be happy to analyze any figures the Toronto board would like to provide the ministry.

**Mr Kennedy:** Have you analyzed their figures? These figures have been public for a month. Has your ministry analyzed these figures? Do they have a reasonable explanation for the variances? Have you, in other words, taken an interest in this very difficult situation within Toronto schools?

**Ms Naylor:** I have not seen those numbers in writing and I have not heard that figure from that particular analyst. If they are provided to the ministry, we would be happy to analyze them, but they are not consistent with our projections for ESL funding for the Toronto school board, which shows a very stable level of funding eligibility.

**Mr Kennedy:** That simply is not what is borne out. In school after school, we're finding that children cannot—we have children sitting in kindergarten classes who cannot access English as a second language. They are having to stand on their head in the various boards and individual schools to find access to them.

Can I get an undertaking from the deputy that these figures could be provided, that a comparison could be done between the ministry's figures and the board's figures? If we're going to talk apples and apples, that should be done in a published way. Is that possible, to actually have those figures—

**Ms Herbert:** Certainly, if the board gives us those numbers, we will be happy to do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll ensure that it happens.

I know my time is limited. I wonder if I could re-ask, because I want to make sure that these things get read into the record—I had asked before for the ministry figures for the impact of the reduction in commercial-industrial taxes on the putative spending on education. I had asked for that, and it wasn't provided today.

I'd also asked for the impact of the reduction in residential taxes, because, as we established in the first session, that shows up as an artificial expense in education.

I would also like to know what happens, specifically, from the conversion of capital from a capital expense to an operating expense, because that also puffs up the amount of money that the ministry appears to be spending on education.

I would also like to know what the impact is from property tax valuation, so that when the valuation goes up—I would like to know specifically, and I'll refer again to what used to be available from the ministry, which is a multi-year review showing how much money is property tax and how much is in provincial operating grant. You have the information to make that equivalent.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** On a point of order, Chair: Mr Kennedy has used his 20 minutes. We have an item on the agenda that has not been covered yet, and that is the consideration of the subcommittee report.

**The Vice-Chair:** I have a bit of a dilemma here. It seems to me there might be a vote. Furthermore, this committee adjourns at 6 o'clock. I know the item is on the agenda. It could be deferred until tomorrow, when the committee meets again. I don't think we have to vote on that right now.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It looks to me like we have a couple of minutes, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** The minister has a point to make?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, just very quickly, Chair, since Mr Kennedy wishes to get things on the record, I'd also like the record to clearly show that we had staff prepared to discuss this on the record here at committee and he didn't wish to avail himself of that. I think it's important for the record to say that as well.

**Mr Kennedy:** With the greatest respect, Minister, that is not correct. Hansard will show that at the last discussion we had, I spoke to Mr Peebles, I believe his name is, from the ministry. The record does need to show it accurately. It will show it, in any event, Madam Minister, and I'm sure you wouldn't want to be seen in contradiction.

The only thing I would like to reconcile is, can this information be available?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Of course.

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Chair, are you the Chair here, or what?

**The Vice-Chair:** We've got one Chair, OK?

Your time is up, Mr Kennedy. It is 6 o'clock, and this meeting will be adjourned. There is a matter, of course, that was on the agenda. It can be deferred until tomorrow for the estimates. Is that OK?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Chair, may I have your assurance that we will discuss it first thing tomorrow?

**The Vice-Chair:** It will be discussed the first thing tomorrow. You have my assurance on that.

Minister, may I just thank you for coming—I know this is the end of your session of estimates—and thank the staff for coming and the excellent work that you're doing. Thank you very much for your support.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Chair.

*The committee adjourned at 1800.*



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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 1 December 1999

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

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## Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Rapport du sous-comité

Ministère de l'Éducation  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 1 December 1999

Mercredi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1999*The committee met at 1605 in room 151.*

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** We have a report from the subcommittee that everyone is going to receive. If there is no objection, we'll simply adopt that report, which relates to the circumstances of changing rooms and sets out a consultation for that in future. I'll wait till every member gets a chance to read that, and then we'll simply have the report accepted as written, if that is your wish.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** It looks like there's no discussion, so I move that the report of the subcommittee be adopted.

**The Chair:** All in favour? Any opposed? The subcommittee report is adopted.

We're awaiting the arrival of the minister to begin our estimates for today. I'll ask the clerk to find out how long that will be.

For the purpose of the record, this committee is in recess until the arrival of the minister.

*The committee recessed from 1607 to 1618.*

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING  
MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION  
ET DE LA FORMATION

**The Chair:** Welcome, Minister.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** Apologies, Mr Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll let you get settled, and you'll appreciate we're going to start as soon as you're settled in.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** What is the process, that later you're going to ask more—

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** We can take more time—

**The Chair:** Yes, Minister, and we will proceed beginning with the NDP. As we awaited your arrival, the three parties agreed to share the time equally. That works out to about 17 and a half minutes per party, and they will ask questions. Given our limited time and the limited time for these proceedings, I'll ask both sides to be as constructive as they can with questions and answers so we can get the most out of the time we have.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Is there a time when we have to go and vote?

**The Chair:** If there is a vote, we'll be called to that, but we'll try to proceed as best we can ahead of that.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** If there's a vote, we've got to go.

**The Chair:** Yes. We can't do this when the House is requiring us.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** The Conservatives haven't had a vote in a while. Only we vote.

**The Chair:** Madam Minister, I would like to welcome you to the committee, and I'd like to invite Mr Marchese to start for the NDP.

**Mr Marchese:** Madam Minister, the other day in the House I asked you a question about student debt. I think it continues to be a problem that plagues many people. It's good to have this opportunity in committee to get our questions answered by you, hopefully.

I have a big concern about student debt, and I always use my daughter as an example. I'm a middle-class parent and I earn a good salary, but I can't afford to pay the tuition fees for my daughter. Very soon, next year, I'll have another daughter in university, either U of T or Ryerson Polytechnic University. It concerns me because my daughter works anywhere from 15 to 23 hours a week in order to make ends meet, in order of her to be able to pay as much as she possibly can for her tuition fees. She works all the summer, naturally, to raise the money and during the year to make up the rest. She's the daughter of a middle-class person.

We have children of middle-class parents who are having a hard time. They don't have access to grants. My daughter doesn't have access to a loan, because her parents make sufficient dollars that she doesn't qualify for a loan. So they're on their own. If they do four years, it's anywhere from \$20,000 to \$25,000 in the arts program, not to talk about specialized programs where, obviously, the fees are higher. I believe it's an incredible burden to put on that student. A student who has to work 15 to 25 hours or 20 to 25 hours, whatever that is—and a lot of them do work that—it affects their studies. I'm not sure whether you have a comment on that when you get to answer. In my view, it affects their studies. I don't think they are as efficient, because they have to put in a lot of hours working.



The debt, at the end of their term, is considerably high. Some will be able to pay it working in the summer and during the year, but many will not. Those who are poor and are able to get a loan will get the loan but will be burdened with anywhere from \$20,000 to \$25,000 to \$30,000. Then they begin to pay that loan and, if they have a good job, it might not be so bad. But most of their resources will end up paying for that loan, leaving very little left for other things they might do with those dollars in terms of buying things they might need or want.

I think the fact that you are underfunding universities so much is forcing the universities to make up for that problem by transferring their debts to students. Naturally, tuition fees have to go up, and they're picking up the burden of your cuts. I think it's wrong to do that, and I want to hear how you would answer that.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Let me start by talking to you about funding for students. This may not be the answer you need for your daughter, because I can only talk from the government's point of view that in 1999 OSAP funding is up 30% from 1995-96. When we talk about the global budget for post-secondary—and I just finished making a speech on this as well—you should know that the budget, in fact, was reduced. You're correct to say that.

Our goal, of course, is to balance the budget over a period of time. That's been the goal of other governments, including the federal government, which has been successful. Some of you were very critical about our not doing it sooner. But in order to do it, we did take out some \$400 million. In our view, that was out of administration. That was the direction. Most of that money has been reinvested in student assistance. That is because the questions we get are exactly your own. For people who do qualify, the cost of OSAP has grown from \$401 million in 1995-96 to an expected \$522 million in 1999-2000.

You mentioned tuition. The universities and colleges are now required to set aside 30% of tuition increases for student aid. So it is a matter of students contributing probably the same percentage towards the cost of their education as we did; we're up to some 34% right now. That would be the same percentage traditionally across the province. It did go down to some 25%; it's back up again. The question has been, not only for our government, but for your government and the Liberal government: What is the right percentage? That's where we are. We've asked them to pay more tuition, but we've also set aside 30% of this increase for student aid. This means that in this year alone there will be an additional \$126 million available to students in 1999-2000.

On the issue of student debt, we spent approximately \$300 million in grants in 1998-99 to ensure that the maximum annual debt incurred by students does not exceed \$7,000. Think about that. When students were borrowing money through OSAP, in 1998-99, there were grants—you can call them what you would like to call them—for any amount over \$7,000 so that the students shouldn't be incurring debts larger than that. When you

give your numbers out, I think the deputy will probably let you know what the debt is for students after they graduate. We have numbers on this because we're tracking them.

The good news is that we did enter into an agreement with the Canada millennium scholarship fund to provide over \$100 million in scholarships to Ontario students in January 2000. So we signed on with the federal government and harmonized the federal and provincial student loan programs for August 2000. This is all hard work that's been going on on behalf of all governments across the country to provide student loan borrowers with enhanced interest-relief benefits and a debt-reduction repayment system.

We've suspended loan payments for low-income and unemployed student loan borrowers for up to 18 months through the Ontario student loans interest relief program. We've also provided a tax credit, in co-operation with the federal government, to help graduates pay the interest on their student loans.

I particularly am not happy when we talk about a \$25,000 figure, which was estimated by the federal government and widely quoted by the media and student groups with regard to the average Ontario student loan debt. It's considerably lower than that. The reasons I don't like people to talk about that (1) it isn't correct and (2) it does cause young people and their parents to kind of give up. I think we have to give the correct numbers.

I don't think anybody wouldn't wish we could keep this debt level down. We're working very hard with the students at our universities and through their organizations and having discussions with them. They do sit on an advisory committee which we've just re-established in the last month.

The average debt for all students who have completed their studies and last received Canada and Ontario student loan support in 1997-98 was \$12,975. That is the average debt for all students who completed. On average, Canada student loans account for about 70% of the repayable debt on student loans issued in 1998-99, and Ontario student loans account for the remaining 30%.

For a student with high financial need, the percentage owed to the federal government may be higher. For example, a single student graduating in 1998-99 and receiving the maximum loan assistance over four years of study would owe some 86% of the repayable debt to the federal government and the balance to the province. This student would be required to make monthly payments of \$294 for the Canada student loan and \$44 for the Ontario student loan. We're looking there at over \$300 a month for a single student who graduated and had received the maximum loan assistance. That would be approximate. The average student may be paying a little over \$300 a month.

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So for most of us, when we're advising our students—and I should say that in our secondary schools this year there will be a focus on getting information to parents of grades 9 and 10 students, discussing with parents the

responsibility they have in not only supporting their students in their schoolwork and helping them make the right plans for their future, but they also—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I'm going to have to stop you.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Why?

**Mr Marchese:** Because otherwise you'll have a monologue for 17 minutes and it'll be very tough.

Let me try making another statement, if I can.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Do you know what I was going to say? You are a parent. You might be interested to know and you should be looking for this as well—

**Mr Marchese:** Try to work it in.

**The Chair:** Minister, we've been trying to keep as focused on the questions as we can, given that we have a very short time and that we will not be able to complete the education estimates. So I invite your co-operation, and I'll try to mediate as fairly as I can.

**Mr Marchese:** It's a problem otherwise.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** How do you balance answering the question—

**Mr Marchese:** If I ask a question—

**The Chair:** By offering you a reasonable time, Minister, and in this case I think that time has been had. To some extent I think each party can indicate its preference in terms of questions—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I was very polite. I let you speak for quite a long while.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** But I thought you were interested in the answer. I was very polite in answering your question.

**Mr Marchese:** Your answer was the whole briefing profile you have there, and it's hard—

**The Chair:** Minister, I would ask you to answer as briefly as you can so we can allow as many questions from each of the parties as possible.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That was a long question, Mr Chair. But I understand what you're trying to do.

**The Chair:** I understand and I appreciate your understanding on that.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Don't put so many segments in your question.

**The Chair:** Mr Marchese, please be brief.

**Mr Marchese:** But I have to, because otherwise I figure you're going to—I understand, Chair. If I ask a question and you have a monologue for another 10 minutes, I probably won't be able to speak again.

**The Chair:** You're now on your time, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** I realize. That's why I'm going to take all the time I need, so that the minister can listen to me for a while.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We all want to hear it.

**Mr Marchese:** You hold on there, Wayne.

**The Chair:** Four minutes, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I'm going to ask him a question in a minute, Mr Chair.

**Mr Marchese:** Please do that.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's not in the purview, Minister.

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to add a few things. I have a problem with this government, as you might imagine.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, I can't imagine that.

**Mr Marchese:** I know you can't. That's why we have such a problem. This is the wealthiest province in Canada.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Because your daughter is going to get a job.

**Mr Marchese:** Because you're in government. I know, we're so lucky.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, your daughter's going to get a job.

**Mr Marchese:** My daughter's going to get a job. Yes, all right.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's right. Just remember that.

**Mr Marchese:** And I love that tax cut. Thanks for that. That's going to create a lot of jobs.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That did help.

**Mr Marchese:** And she'll be lucky, yes. This is the wealthiest province in Canada, and yet it's at the bottom in terms of funding for universities. They receive less funding per capita than any other province in the country, and it's the wealthiest. Minister, under your stewardship and your Premier's, we get the least amount of funding in this country. If we can't restore some of those dollars in good times, we surely won't be able to do it in bad times. If we have another recession, as I guarantee we will—I can't predict the year, but I tell you—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's not very positive.

**Mr Marchese:** I know, and I want to be positive too. I wish I could will it away, but you know from history that recessions come every seven years or so. Whether you like it or not, they will come. We will face the next recession, in my view, in the next couple of years. When that happens, we're not going to have the money to restore the cuts you've made.

We had a recession and there was no money. Now that you have a good economy, for whatever reason—let's say it's the tax cut—you're not restoring those dollars to those essential areas. I am worried about that, because if we can't restore money in good times, we won't be able to do it in bad. Things are bad now and, in my view, will get worse.

I know you have answers about how your tax cut has created all these wonderful, full-time jobs for the civil servants you fired who are now self-employed and probably earning some good money and some not-so-good money. You say that my daughter will have a job because of your tax cut. I tell you, you've taken \$6 billion out. Every year \$6 billion goes out to people, and we have to make up for those dollars that go out every year. Some of those dollars we make up by the cuts you've made to social services and all the other cuts you will continue to make.

What percentage is right in terms of what students should be paying? You say 30%. In some universities



they're paying over 40%. It's an unfair burden to put on students. I believe governments need to put more money into education so students don't bear the burden of the costs. What you've done is continue to shift that load and that problem on to students. That's the problem they're facing. My middle-class daughter is facing that problem. Middle-class students, and upper middle class, I would argue, but middle-class students—and a lot of people will claim that definition—are suffering because of the cuts you've made. I don't know what your solution is, but I tell you the solution is not to put more debt burden on to the students.

**The Chair:** We'll have to find out the minister's solution in the next round. We have to go now to the government side and Mr O'Toole.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Thank you, Minister, for giving members of all sides a chance today to air their views, with post-secondary education and the appropriateness of funding at the heart of the debate.

I have to give some context to why it's so vital to me, and to all Ontario, that this portion of our education and training system is made more accessible for all students and more accountable.

As the parent of five children—I have two in graduate school and three in university at the moment—it's critical for me to feel comfortable with the deregulation of tuition, an important decision equating tuition fees to the outcomes of the education, whether it's related to the income as a professional. For instance, an engineer is going to make more as a graduate than someone in the field of social work, justifying of course that both are legitimate choices.

Minister, I appreciate the time you've given me to bring to your attention the important contribution that Durham College and university centre has made for all of Ontario. In the last government we met with the then minister, Dave Johnson, who listened effectively and allocated an opportunity for an important partnership between colleges and universities, and that was the Durham College university funding. I think it was some five million new dollars to allow that partnership to evolve and grow and create accessibility for students to be educated in their own communities.

I know that members on all sides would say that's the right direction. The cost of university is made up primarily of student housing issues and food. If they stay at home, you could argue that we reduce the cost when we increase accessibility. I think it's important to look at how this is evolving. Of course you just have to look at the whole distance learning issue. The opportunities are endless, and I think there's certainly an opportunity here with our minister to bring forward new and exciting ways of delivering education.

I have to put on the record that the opportunities, when I look at the SuperBuild Growth Fund—I've read your letter to all the colleges and universities encouraging them to bring forward new initiatives to address the issues I've talked about: accessibility, affordability and accountability. Gary Polonsky, the president of Durham

College, has been an envisioned leader from the very beginning. All politics aside, I believe he's prepared to work, and is on the record as working, with this government. I believe he's on the record as saying we're moving in the right direction to give them opportunities to create new futures.

The former chair, Sharon Young, was a person I knew to be intimately familiar with her community and the various groups and people who are trying to return to the workforce, to reskill themselves. I was with Minister Snobelen at the first graduation of the youth apprenticeship program at Durham College and training centre, and watched about 17 new graduates of the youth apprenticeship program that was started, funded and committed to as a new way of providing mobility and linking education, high school students going to college to learn important job-related skills.

**1640**

Terry Hing, the current chair of the board of governors of the college, has been very supportive of this new application they have made for funding. I hope in your response you'll address that. Judith Spring, who's a professor or lecturer there and also chair of the Lakeridge Health hospital board, is very supportive of the new ways that we're putting together partnerships with all the different community players.

I do want to go back to the importance of the college role. If you want to refer to an article in Maclean's magazine from this week, the November 29 issue—no, the issue I'm referring to was in the Post on the weekend—it said that a survey of the top 400 CEOs said very clearly that the most important job-related component in the educational system that has to be addressed is student opportunities, the work experience and co-op experience.

I'm just wondering, in your new model for post-secondary education—I know I've covered a lot of territory here—are you addressing this whole new approach of integrating and partnering with the private sector for work experience opportunities and learning opportunities and then linking that to the lab facilities within our post-secondary facilities?

For the last point I just read, all members would have received the current Q&As for the University of Toronto. On the second page, Robert Prichard, the president, in his opening remarks, said very clearly that for 10 years there has been neglect of the infrastructure of our post-secondary facilities. He supports that this government and its strategic investments are the right decisions for the new economies of the future.

Minister, I've given you a number of opportunities to address not just Durham College and its excellence but I am sure every member here—Mr Wettlaufer and others have spoken to me about the important work their colleges are doing in partnerships with their communities. Perhaps that gives you enough latitude to respond in a general sense. I'm proud of Durham College. How can I say it any more bluntly?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** One of the great things about coming to this committee is that I do get to see some of

my colleagues and hear them talk about what they are proud of. Durham is a great leader. It has shown many of us here in Ontario and Canada and around the world what can be done when communities work together. I think that's one of the challenges we do have.

It actually goes back to Mr Marchese's question. That has to do with where we fit. The accusation we get is that we're 10th and last, but as a matter of fact when we take into consideration the province's share of the funding for supporting our students who go on to post-secondary, and we take into consideration the partnerships the universities have with the private sector, in Canada we're fifth. There is an old formula that's used for people who want the government, the people, the taxpayers—including your daughter some day—to pay up. In Ontario and in many parts of North America there is a different kind of a definition. That has to do with, the students pay their share; the government will pay their share. Where is the private sector?

The end result actually is, what is the role of the private sector? The private sector gets the recipients of our colleges and universities. In Ontario we asked them to help us, because we know tomorrow's jobs will demand even more specialized skills and knowledge, and the demand for post-secondary education will continue to grow rapidly because we live in an environment where students know they will have better and more opportunities if they continue on in their schooling, whether it be at a college or a university—which we have better data on than some of our other training opportunities, like apprenticeship training, where we know we have very highly skilled, well-paid jobs. We're encouraging that. You mentioned the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. We know we have to partner in order to get the support we need from those people who are telling us they need young people in areas where they will get the jobs.

One of the programs where we decided to do that was called ATOP. You mentioned it just for a moment, the access to opportunities program. There's so much I could answer in your question here, but more students than ever before—parents are thinking this and students are thinking it—will be enrolling in high-tech programs at Ontario's colleges and universities. We can thank this program called ATOP, which will accommodate up to about 23,000 additional students in these programs. This is very important to meet the needs of all sectors in filling jobs where our students and our workers, and therefore Ontario and the country, can be competitive. The government's total investment in the access to opportunities program will reach up to \$228 million over the first three years of the program. All 17 universities and 25 colleges have responded enthusiastically to the program.

In 1998-99 they created opportunities for about 7,000 additional students, and the growth is going to double in 1999. They have been very successful in forming these partnerships with the private sector. When combined with private sector contributions—and I hope some of you will use the Hansard here and send it out to the pub-

lic, because this is good information that's very difficult to get out in the general media because it's good news. There are a lot of doomers and gloomers around who don't want to talk about good stuff.

When we get both together, which could reach \$136 million—this is the private sector—the total ATOP contributions by the end of 2000-01 could reach \$364 million. That's money that has been contributed by the private sector and matched by the people of Ontario, because it is their money. This is causing a lot of excitement in all our universities. I look at my colleague who knows the exciting things that are happening at McMaster University—and Loyalist, I might add. What is your university, Mr Marchese?

**Mr Marchese:** We've got quite a number of universities—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, no. This is an opportunity. York is yours.

**Mr Marchese:** In terms of Toronto, you mean, as opposed to—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes, York is yours. That's a great example of a university that is partnering with many colleges, because we're asking our universities and colleges to work together. York has taken a lead role there.

In the Ottawa area, there are two colleges and two universities that formed a consortium with the regional government. Together—and I went to the announcement of this program—the colleges and universities in the Ottawa area raised \$55 million in pledges from organizations in that region by working together.

Other examples from the private sector: This morning I and one of my colleagues, Sean Morley, met with representatives from Georgian College. They have a partnership with IBM and announced a \$2.8-million donation to create some 40, I guess the word would be "work stations" or "seats" with AS/400 midframe computers. One of the great challenges we have is to keep our colleges and universities current.

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I tried to say to my colleague that, yes, there was a reduction in funding, but there's been a reinvestment. The reinvestment over the last three years has been to support students who need assistance. We call it student assistance because there are many ways we've done it; it hasn't just been through OSAP. It's been with the students themselves and the 30% set aside and also through the student opportunity trust fund, which was a program where the universities raised money with the private sector for student assistance and the government matched it. So there's lots of reinvestment in private sector partnerships, which takes us to the \$3.5-billion budget, which is higher than when we began reducing, and this year is over \$400 million. That's partially because with the additional new number of students that we're planning for—this is a huge challenge right across the country, in North America, but what an exciting time, because in the history of post-secondary education in Ontario, the first growth period was after the Second World War, when the



soldiers came back and the University of Toronto and a couple of others grew, and we grew our university system. The second great growth period was in the mid-1960s, some 30 years ago, when John Robarts, the Premier of the day and my predecessor in London North, along with his colleague Bill Davis, began the development of our college system.

This is the third growth period, in which we will face the same challenges, but what an exciting time for young people. Some 88,000 students, we've been advised through the work we do across the country with Stats Canada and with our own double cohort, our students who are now in grades 9 and 10, will be looking at a growth period in our colleges and our universities beginning in the year 2003.

**The Chair:** We now turn to the official opposition. Mrs Bountrogianni.

**Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):** Good afternoon, Minister. Thank you for answering these questions.

I'll just quickly respond to a couple of things I heard before I start asking my questions. You mentioned the ATOP scholarships, basically for science and engineering. They are needed and very well appreciated by the students and their professors. One of the problems, however, is that our infrastructure is not supporting the increased number of students that are entering these programs. So it's a Catch-22; it's a double-edged sword for these students and for the institutions that house them. I'll get more specific when I ask you questions about the SuperBuild fund.

Another comment in response to the private sector: Private money is always welcome, however, I'll give you the Apotex example as one example of how we can't depend on private money for future planning. You can't hire tenured professors based on private money. It's always welcome, it's needed, but it's not guaranteed; it can be cut at any time. Apotex is a great example. They were mad at the federal government so they took away their gift of \$20 million to U of T, which really was more like \$60 million, with all the other matched funds. So I think we have to be careful and not over-rely on private money.

Minister, I will be very focused in my questions, which will enable you to be very focused in your answers, given the shortness of time.

Is any of the funding in the estimates directly or indirectly targeted for an initiative by this government to introduce private universities?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** In the estimates? The answer to that is no.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Will the Minister be making a decision about privatization in the near future?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Depending on your definition of "near future," I would hope that would be considered as part of the charter with regard to our colleges.

As you know, through public discussions in the last year, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board spoke to partners within communities across the province and

made reports back to the government, which were published in what we refer to as the OJIB report. One of the challenges that our advisers, who could be any citizens who showed up at those meetings, told us is that in order for our economy to be competitive and for our young people on graduation, we hope, to get jobs, we were going to have to take a look at flexibility within the college system and within the university system.

One of the recommendations for the college system, which I've already talked about, when it was first developed, was its ability to effectively and efficiently train the students. They needed to have different options. So I'm not certain yet, but in our own discussions, as we look at our best advisers, in my case including yourself, where do we go in being more competitive and what does a charter really mean? Three issues have been brought to my attention, more so than some of the others.

One is the recommendation that we look seriously at applied degrees, which is a necessity for the colleges and universities to work together in favour of our students, and students having choices and opportunities and, in the end, having the quality and also that piece of paper that is recognized all over the world. It isn't good enough just to graduate. It's important that the qualifications and standards our students end up with can be competitive all over the world.

The second recommendation, or at least the part of the recommendation I should refer to in responding to the question, is the need for the colleges and universities to be more flexible. In the instance of the college system, we're looking at their ability to compete. They may need to have mechanisms whereby they can create some public-private sector partnerships to deliver some of the programs they are being asked to deliver beyond their capabilities now. So there will be public discussion around that.

In the context of those two issues, there's been a question, and that is: Even with the Superbuild Growth Fund—and I absolutely agree actually with your observation that there's a need for updating of buildings and maintenance that has been ignored for a period of time, so part of that fund will be for maintenance and upgrading of facilities. It's very important. As a matter of fact, part of the—

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Minister, I don't mean to be rude, but I have lots of questions. You've answered my question: You will be considering it, and you will be getting input in the context of being competitive.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** In the context of the need for spaces and the roles of the colleges and universities now, and where the gaps are.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** I hope you would move with caution on this, because eventually public money may dribble into these private institutions, either through OSAP or through federal grants, private grants, private contracts which, in my opinion, would lower the equality of the public institutions, and we just don't have the same amount of scholarships that the Americans have. Harvard has three times the amount of scholarships of all the

Canadian universities put together. So we can't compare ourselves with that. I hope we're not going down that road. I've been honest with you in my opinion on that, and I appreciate your honesty.

The estimates report indicates on page 88 that \$630 million has been set aside for capital spending after the special warrants have been taken out of the \$750 million. This is the SuperBuild Growth Fund, I assume. To date, what is the total amount of requests submitted under the funding guidelines by individual institutions? I understand you won't have the partnered institutions because the deadline is December 15. But do you or your staff have the number of individual institutions applying for this money with private matched proposals, and who has applied?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** On November 15 the applications came in for universities or colleges separate from each other. On December 15 the applications will come in for the partnership piece. I'm not trying to avoid the question, but I have not asked for the answer and there's a reason for that.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Could I get the answer at some point?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes, at some point.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** OK, that's fine. We haven't got that answer now. In a University of Western Ontario article you were quoted as saying that the SuperBuild fund is not a share issue and that the competition will drive your decisions. I understand that from the philosophical framework of your government. However, what about schools that are either smaller or for whatever reason cannot be as competitive in attracting private matching for these buildings; in other words, schools that have the need but don't have the competitive edge? Is there anything in the estimates to address those needs?

1700

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Not in the estimates. I can only say that we're as concerned as anyone about the upgrading, viability and competitiveness of each and every one of our institutions. But this SuperBuild is meant to meet the needs of some 88,000 students, although it will not meet the needs of 88,000. That's not our intent. I think we can do it other ways than with just building. So there's a balance, which we can talk about.

It's going to be competitive, because most of the funding to our colleges and universities is based on a per-student—you know the corridor funding yourself. This is more about what are the goals of those universities, what do they feel their needs might be, do they feel that there will be an increased enrolment, do they want to take on the responsibility for increased enrolment?

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Will there be an avenue for them to apply?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes. Some of them may choose to respond in a different way. So really, this is going to be their community; it's going to be their choice as to what they ask us for.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** The SuperBuild Growth Fund does not address—and I'm not trying to be gloomy here; I'm just representing reality—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** These are great questions.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** —does not address the need for student residences. We have a housing problem, as you know, and we have a huge student housing problem. We will have an even greater problem once the double cohort hits, and even before that with the echo boom. What funding is in the estimates to deal with this urgent need, given the enrolment growth?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I'm going to speak off the top, and then I'm going to let my deputy correct me because I have no pride about making mistakes and then being corrected.

It's been my understanding, having worked with the colleges and universities over a period of time, that there hasn't been public money going into student residences. I'm probably about to be corrected, but so be it.

The SuperBuild is not for student residences. That's another issue. Universities have access to private funding, and they've been very successful in having long-term plans about how they accommodate their students, and so have student councils. Last week I gave a speech at Laurier. The student council owns the housing. It's amazing how well these student councils are doing. They are in business. They own this building, and the students rent it and pay down the mortgage. Within the building you won't be a bit surprised to know they have a pub. Every time you go somewhere, people are trying to do things in a different way, and even the students are in business.

How did I do in answering that question? You'll want me to be corrected if I'm incorrect.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** That's fine, Minister, because I don't think there is anything in there.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** There's not. Thank you.

In a recent report from the Council of Ontario Universities it was noted that deferred maintenance needs—there is a lot of need for—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Ninety per cent of your SuperBuild fund is for new buildings. Is that correct?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** And 10% is for maintenance. My contacts within the universities have said that while they appreciate the money and the opportunity to apply for new buildings, it would have been better if they had just been trusted to have the money and decide themselves whether it's a new building or an addition or if it's maintenance of an existing building, because with existing buildings there are mice, there are rats. This is from people who are non-partisan, and I believe that when they speak to me they are non-partisan.

Is there anything in the estimates now or in future plans to address the need for maintenance costs of aging buildings?



**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** One of the great shocks I experienced when I became the minister, when we became the government, was the amount of money that had been the debt of the universities—I shouldn't use the word "debt"—that had been the challenge of the universities for their own maintenance. As far as I'm concerned, there aren't too many people who can build buildings and not set aside a certain amount of money to pay taxes and to maintain their own buildings like we have to do in our own homes. There hasn't clearly been a policy of former governments to work with the colleges and universities to have a good business plan in this regard.

In our SuperBuild Growth Fund there is \$62.2 million for the facilities renewal program. This is actually a greater proportion than has normally been set aside. I could give you those numbers. I've actually looked at them for the last 10 years, and this is a fair amount. But what we have done in setting out the rules for the colleges and universities in applying for SuperBuild this time is that they must indeed file with us a plan for their facilities renewal. I think it's totally unacceptable that we've gone on this way—together, I might add—in the province of Ontario without a facilities renewal program, and I know you would agree with me in this regard. Unfortunately, I think that was something like \$900 million.

**Interjection:** There have been various estimates but that's—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** It was a huge number. So we've got a 10-year plan which may or may not be changed, because we're flexible if we can get some good ideas, but part of the SuperBuild—we're not expecting people to apply for capital without showing us what their facility renewal program will be, and—

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Thank you, Minister. Chair, do I have any more time?

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** OK. You talked about the millennium scholarship fund in your notes and in your response to Mr Marchese. This money was meant to supplement the Ontario portion. In the leaked document, it was stated that perhaps you are thinking or the government is thinking of rejecting or renegeing on that; in other words, not reinvesting the savings from the federal millennium fund. Can you comment on that?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** We in fact plan to keep our promise, as I answered in the House, actually, and reinvest.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** So you will reinvest approximately \$60 million, I believe, \$50 million of savings. That \$50 million will be invested?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** And it will be invested in scholarships or in loans?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Some of it will be reinvested in direct student assistance. Part of it will be reinvested in the Aiming for the Top program, which is a \$35-million fund for secondary school students upon graduation. We

have actually spent the last, I'd like to say few weeks, but few months trying to design that fund so that every secondary school will have students that—

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** I'm sorry for interrupting. You said the ATOP fund, so are you going to put that in that fund? Is that part of that \$35 million or on top of that?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, there are two funds: there's the access to opportunities program, which is the one that I've already described, and then the student assistance program is called Aiming for the Top. That's the \$35 million, 10,000 scholarships over a three-year period for students who have needs in our secondary schools upon graduation.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** And that's \$35 million.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**The Chair:** We now move on to the NDP for its next session of questions. And perhaps, Mr Weir, if you are called upon to speak in response to questions, I could ask you to read your name into the record and introduce yourself for the assistance of Hansard.

Mr Bisson. We have 15 minutes approximately.

**M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) :** Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

J'ai une couple de questions faisant affaire avec le système collégial et le système universitaire dans le nord de l'Ontario. Je vais vous donner une chance, madame la ministre, de vous brancher.

Comme vous le savez, il y a eu des rumeurs, et on s'est parlés de ça justement il y a une couple de semaines à l'Assemblée, faisant affaire avec les rumeurs des changements—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Could you just wait a minute, Gilles? I haven't got the French translation here at all. What channel?

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**Interjection:** Number one.

**M. Bisson :** Les Français sont toujours numéro un, madame.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I still don't have it. I'll need another headset. Technology, huh?

**M. Bisson :** OK, c'est mieux ? On a tous une traduction là ?

Comme j'ai dit, madame la ministre, vous savez que ça fait une semaine ou deux que nous nous sommes parlés à l'Assemblée concernant certaines rumeurs dans le système collégial, le système universitaire, qu'il était pour avoir des changements. Vous savez qu'il y a des discussions présentement dans le système pour regarder à faire des fusionnements d'universités. Il y a eu certaines suggestions de fusionnements entre des collèges et des universités.

J'aimerais premièrement pour le record, pour essayer de mettre un peu de clarification à cette situation, savoir quelles sont les intentions du ministère, à la lumière de ces rumeurs-là qu'il était pour avoir une certaine fusion entre des collèges du nord et des universités. Toute l'assignation était que certains de ces systèmes ne sont pas assez grands et que peut-être il y aurait des économies à faire en les mettant ensemble entre les collèges et

universités. J'aimerais clarifier que ce n'est pas l'intention du gouvernement d'aller dans cette direction.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Well, not unlike my response to what Marie Bountrogianni asked with regard to what she read in the newspaper, I can only say to you that there are some colleges and universities that may be looking at different ways of doing business. Their presidents may from time to time have discussions with us about this, but I haven't heard from everybody. It may be on their agenda with regard to the, I think, direction in many ways of the government to have partnerships for students. We talked a little bit about it, how we've got these partnerships around programs. Many of us know the nursing programs; there are many others. Sheridan College built a building on the campus of York. I can't keep up with all of the ideas that the colleges and universities have.

So in your community there may be some of those ideas. I'm not aware of them now, although I am aware of some of the joint programming. What you're talking about, I'm not aware of.

**M. Bisson :** La réponse que je cherche—il n'y a pas des intentions de la part du gouvernement provincial de faire le fusionnement entre certains collèges et universités, d'en faire une administration ?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No.

**M. Bisson :** OK.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** If they want to come to us and talk about that, that's up to them.

**M. Bisson :** Ils ne sont pas intéressés. Ils ne veulent pas aller dans cette direction. Je voulais juste clarifier que c'étaient des rumeurs qui étaient non fondées et qu'il n'y a pas des intentions—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Well, there are a few that I'm not about to talk about today, because I talk to people confidentially as we look at the new ways of serving students, that may indeed be talking about merging. But again, it's up to them to talk to me.

**M. Bisson :** OK. C'est leur décision à eux autres de s'opérer s'ils veulent, mais vous n'avez pas l'intention de forcer le processus ?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No.

**M. Bisson :** La réponse est non ?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** The answer is no.

**M. Bisson :** OK. Merci.

La deuxième question—puis mon collègue a beaucoup de questions—a trait à la situation qu'on trouve avec les universités dans le nord.

Comme vous le savez, le nord de l'Ontario fait environ 8 % à 9 % de la population provinciale. C'est plus dispendieux, si on regarde les coûts par étudiant, d'opérer certaines institutions dans le nord parce qu'on a moins d'étudiants dans nos institutions. Le coût par étudiant, des fois, est plus élevé. Mais on se trouve dans une situation où pour nous dans le nord c'est important de nous assurer que les jeunes le plus souvent possible ont l'opportunité de continuer leur éducation post-secondaire dans le nord. Comme vous le savez, si les jeunes partent, beaucoup de fois ils ne reviennent pas,

puis c'est négatif pour nous dans le nord dans le sens de garder notre population et de développer notre économie.

Vous savez que, par exemple, l'Université de Hearst avait déjà soulevé la question, comment organiser des formules de financement, comment s'éloigner de la base qu'on a présentement qui dit que c'est seulement par étudiants, comment regarder un peu différemment le nord pour faire sûr que ces institutions ont les fonds nécessaires pour offrir des programmes pour être capables d'attirer et de garder les étudiants dans le nord.

J'aimerais savoir si la ministre s'intéresse, dans son ministère, à regarder cette situation pour voir s'il n'y a pas une manière de changer les formules de financement jusqu'à un certain point, pour ne pas seulement regarder combien d'étudiants pour déterminer le financement mais aussi pour s'assurer que ces collèges et universités ont l'argent nécessaire pour offrir des programmes pleins aux étudiants, ce qui est nécessaire pour les garder et les attirer dans le nord.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Let me first of all state to you the view of our government and governments before us. There will be a place in our colleges and universities for every student that is qualified, and I like to use the word "motivated" but some people might use a different word. There has been I think a very focused plan in Ontario to provide colleges, especially colleges, and some universities in parts of Ontario where there aren't as many students, and you live in one of those parts.

I hope that you would agree with me that students going to post-secondary education should have reasonable accessibility and that we have to do our very best to keep it.

Having said that, I think your question was, "How do we help them with the funding?" In fact, the funding system that's in place right now, at least for our universities, they like it. It's called the corridor system. When others have looked to change it—in fact your government—they weren't very pleased about this. So I think we learned from the effort—

**M. Bisson :** Dépendant de quelle institution.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** You could be right in that regard, but the vast majority was very unhappy about the effort.

I think what you're saying is, "What do we do to help these universities?" That's an ongoing discussion, and the funding formula is the formula that we operate with now. As we look at a new charter for the colleges with flexibility, if we take a look at the focus of the government, it is to provide accessibility and quality education to students. I'm sure these questions will be part of some public discussion. This year the universities advised us that they needed some assistance with operating dollars, but that was across the board and we did in fact provide another \$23 million over and above the formula for accessibility to students in the operating grants to come forward.

**M. Bisson :** Je veux juste faire le point rapidement parce que mon collègue a d'autres questions. Dans la situation du collège universitaire de Hearst—



*Interjection.*

**M. Bisson :** OK. Dans la situation du collège universitaire de Hearst, le problème qu'on a c'est, parce que eux n'ont pas les étudiants pour être capables d'avoir les gros budgets des autres universités, qu'il est plus difficile pour eux d'offrir tous les programmes qu'ils voudraient offrir pour avoir une croissance dans ce système, pour garder les jeunes dans notre région. Il est très important qu'on regarde comment on peut trouver des manières intéressantes pour financer ce collège universitaire pour donner la chance de faire la croissance nécessaire pour les étudiants de notre région.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I just wanted to quickly get back to the earlier point about Ontario's ranking as number 10. Your deputy said that when you add our portion of funding, yours, and the private sector, it's number five. What portion of that private sector funding constitutes the greater portion of the two, between yours and it, that brings it to a number five ranking?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Are you asking what proportion we pay?

**Mr Marchese:** I've argued we're number 10. Your deputy said, "Oh, no. In the ranking, we're number five." Or was it you?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Actually, I said that.

**Mr Marchese:** It was you. Between the portion you add as a government and the portion that comes from the private sector, we're number five. That's what you said. My question is: What portion does the private sector funding take that brings us to ranking number five? Without it, what would we be ranking?

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**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Without it, on the provincial operating grants per capita, we are number 10; on the provincial operating grants per student, we're number 9; on the provincial operating grants plus fees per student, we're number 6; and in the total operating income per student, we're number 4.

I should tell you that when your government was in office between 1990 and 1995, we were ninth, ninth, seventh, seventh and eighth. So my point is, why didn't you do something about it?

**Mr Marchese:** That's a great answer. Just a quick statement and another comment.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** We are better off, because you were number 7 and number 6 on the total amount.

**Mr Marchese:** We had a recession from 1990 into 1995, the worst in our history in Canada.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Hold on, boys. Let me just finish.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Even on the total—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I've only got four minutes. We had the worst recession in our history, literally, next to the Depression. That means there were no dollars. Except for the first year we were in government, in 1991-92, our transfer payments were incredibly high. That may not have been smart, but we added a lot of money based on the promise that we were making to the universities and elementary and secondary systems. In a recession, it

may not have been the smartest thing to do, but if you've got no dollars it makes it tough.

Now you've got the money. You've had the money in your last six years. You're not pouring it back in; you're cutting at a time when you do have money. I find it morally depressing that when you have the money to put back into the system, you don't do it. How can you justify, in a good economy, not putting money back into the system?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** The answer to that question is that there's more money in the post-secondary system now than ever before, period. There was a reduction, which I politely described to you, and there was a reinvestment—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, thank you. I've got another question.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** —that I also politely described to you, and now there is more money in the system than ever before.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, we're running out of time.

**The Chair:** It's Mr Marchese's last minute. I'll just let him make his point.

**Mr Marchese:** We are the wealthiest province, and it's a shameful thing that we are 10th in ranking, and by your definition it changes to a different kind of ranking.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** And we were ninth in ranking when you were in government.

**Mr Marchese:** The problem is, because of your underfunding, the class ratio is the highest we've ever seen in colleges and universities. We need instructors, and we have fewer instructors. We need to replace out-of-date equipment, and we need to provide adequate support, counselling and academic advice for students. In light of the problems we are experiencing in our college and university system, with the points that I've just added, how can you live with that in the kind of economy that you're experiencing, where you're saying we're doing so well?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** How much time do I have to answer this question?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** In 30 seconds I'll say it very simply. You should ask yourself a question: Why is it that in the proportion of 18-to-24-year-olds who go on to college and university in the history of the province, we have the highest ratio of 18-to-24-year-olds who go on to college and university than ever before? We are the most accessible university system, the most accessible college system. You're complaining that we're not spending enough money in operating grants, and they're still going. Isn't that interesting?

**Mr Marchese:** That's great. We're underfunding it, but we've got students going into the system, so that's great.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** You'd better figure out why they keep going, because they're there.

**Mr Marchese:** Because of the underfunding, I guess.

**The Chair:** We now have about 15 minutes for the government party. This round is 15 minutes each, and we'll try to keep on track.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, I'd like to pick up on what you and M. Marchese were talking about here, and that is the fact that we do have the highest-educated student force in the G8; I believe the highest of the provinces as well. Unfortunately, we have 78% of these undergraduate students in university taking a general arts program. I'm not going to criticize the general arts program, because I graduated with one. That's why I'm here.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** You should rethink this statement.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Of course, in my region of Waterloo and just outside it we have some of the finest universities and colleges in Canada. The University of Guelph is just outside the region of Waterloo, but it's my alma mater so I have to include it. It was rated the number one comprehensive university in all of Canada this year.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** What about Conestoga?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** And Laurier university and the University of Waterloo, which initiated the co-op program. But I cannot neglect Conestoga College. Conestoga College is run by John Tibbitts, the president, who is probably the most entrepreneurial of any president of any post-secondary institution in all of Canada, and maybe all of North America. He has initiated the partnership program with private business, encouraging all kinds of investment by high-tech firms in that college.

This falls into line with the Canadian Advanced Technology Association. Two years ago they appeared before the finance committee, and Mr Marchese, I believe you were there at the time. They said we needed 56,000 graduates in high tech, and we were only training 14,000 at the time. They made the point at that time that if those graduates were from the high-tech program instead of the general arts program, the debt-to-income ratio would be much lower than it is today.

**Mr Marchese:** Get rid of all the arts.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You're having trouble with that, are you, Mr Marchese?

**Mr Marchese:** Get rid of all the arts.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, it's not a matter of getting rid of all the arts. My point is that I don't think there are enough jobs for students graduating in a general arts program; there are lots of jobs for those graduates of a high-tech program.

I wonder if there is enough guidance counselling for high school students, to direct them into the appropriate classification, appropriate programs, especially when one considers that there is so much duplication.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: 96% of general arts graduates get jobs within two years of graduating.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's not a point of order, and it's also not correct.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** There's a minute's time, and I will ask for co-operation from Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, do you have some figures indicating the success ratios of various universities and various colleges, insofar as graduates are concerned in obtaining employment?

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, oh, some colleges are going to go.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, no, that's not what—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Actually I'd like to answer that question. I think all of us in these estimates reviews should be very proud of the accomplishments of our students.

One of the demands of the public, and of the students, is clearly accountability. That is why we have worked both with our colleges of applied arts and technology and our universities in looking at the results of some key performance indicators. The key performance indicator does talk, by college, with regard to our percentage of employment. You've mentioned your colleges, and I think some of our colleagues here might want to hear a little bit about their own.

If we're looking, for instance, at employment, in the survey of December 1997 and May 1998 college graduates, employment rate six months after graduation, out of curiosity, the bottom line for the colleges, the system total, is 89%. But we do have huge numbers here: Algonquin, 90%; Boréal, 83%; Cambrian, 78%; Canadore, 86%; Centennial, 90%; Conestoga—is that the one—  
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**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's the one.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** They were number one, at 94%, and they did celebrate. We should be all be celebrating. These are all really great numbers: Confederation, 86%; Durham, 91%; Fanshawe, in my riding, 92%; George Brown, 89%; Georgian, 90%; Gouinlock, 68%; Humber, 91%; Lambton, 89%; Loyalist, 89%—we've got these if you want them—Mohawk, 89%; Niagara, 88%; Northern, 84%—tell my friend, Mr Bisson—St Clair College, 93%; St Lawrence, 86%; Sault, 76%; Seneca, 88%; Sheridan, 93%—now there's a close one for you; you've got a contest there, Mr Wettlaufer—Sir Sandford Fleming, 86%.

These college-to-college comparisons actually could produce misleading results because of the size, but more because of the local employment opportunities. I just want to warn people in using these numbers, which are all so great and we should be proud of them, that there are local employment conditions—which was the question, of course, from my colleague, Mr Bisson, which I respect—the program mix, the demographics for the graduates, and we should consider each one on its own.

Having said that, and I'm a great believer that you have to consider each one on its own, we cannot stop these colleges from having a lot of fun with regard to how well they did.

**Mr Marchese:** We should agree that they shouldn't.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Mr Marchese, you know you have a lot of fun yourself. Sometimes you have fun when



I'm asking questions, and sometimes you have real fun in the House. I remember when I had fun when you were a minister as well, so we're even.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll try to remember that.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, you're looking at a former minister of culture, correct. We had a lot of good meetings together.

I'm giving those numbers only because they're all very high. If we today could say anything, we should be thanking the colleges for doing such a great job. The real satisfaction of being the minister at this time is that it's actually, for them, not good enough. They actually want to do better.

One of the questions that has come my way from the students has been, "You ask us what we're doing six months after we leave, and we'd probably like to answer that question more frequently." It would be good for us to do that, because then we can track them, find out the success stories, do a little bit more in the first two or three years after graduation from college or university. These are challenging times for young people. Some of them will say, "I didn't get a job where I wanted to get a job," but I think in the next few years—because of the fabulous description that Mr Marchese made at the very beginning of the estimates, about the possibilities of our economy, and I agree with you. This does mean that your daughter will be working, and that is different from a whole generation of young people for almost a decade in time, not just when your government was in government. There have been some tough times.

But it does take political will to make change, and the colleges are doing that on their own and the government is doing that on its own. We did in fact go out and seek the best advice we could with regard to how we could in fact get more investment into Ontario so that these young people could have these jobs. That has happened. You know the job numbers, over 700,000 new jobs. That means we cannot rest on our laurels, but it also means that we have to be very careful about the training that we do. I think that was the basis of Mr Wettlaufer's questioning regarding the balance with regard to people getting general BAs and arts degrees.

By the way, for anybody who questions you in this province, because I know that we do have a democracy, which has opposition, and that's fine—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Now, Mr Curling, you know how much you like this part of the job.

The fact is, we're in a democracy; people are going to argue with us. But I think when we get the questions, you should feel free to tell the public that we did this year have our registration in our arts courses, as Dr Bountrogianni and I have discussed, up some 10%. There may be somebody who would like to analyze that—I'm not one of them—but it did happen, and that's good. There is a myth out there that people aren't flocking towards the arts courses, but in fact they are.

More importantly, right now the colleges are, just for the purpose—I mean, when they're applying for this

SuperBuild Growth Fund, which is 742 million new dollars in our post-secondary for capital, they're having to think very carefully about what kind of buildings they're building. One of the other challenges we have, if we want to use the 88,000 number—and the best thinkers we can get with regard to advice to the government are suggesting, "That's OK for now; we've got a bit of time," but they're also suggesting that we have to be taking advantage of the great challenge of education in the next millennium, and that is the use of technology. This will be a century where education as we know it will change because of the challenges of technology. Do we put our efforts into distance education, on-line learning? We have a generation of Canadians who would like to do a lot of their post-secondary work, whether they're between the ages of 18 and 24 or beyond, because industry is asking us to respond to the demands of people who are in the workplace who want to have credits towards university degrees or towards other kinds of training, especially related to technology. So it isn't a matter of just buildings, which we're advised about. It is also a matter of the virtual classroom, which is on-line learning and which can be the use of all kinds of technologies while people actually remain in their homes.

**The Chair:** Just a few seconds left.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** How many seconds?

**The Chair:** About 20.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Can I have them?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**The Chair:** We'll pass on then to the official opposition.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** I don't want to take Emie's time. Minister, TVO is under your ministry's umbrella now too. There's been a lot in the paper about more of an educational focus. Depending on how you define educational foci, Steve Paikin's programs, Studio 2 and Fourth Reading, may or may not fit. Do you have any plans for Mr Paikin and his programs?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** If I did, I wouldn't be announcing them in this meeting.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** But we do like him.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I actually like him a lot. I taught him to swim once, and he certainly knows how to do that.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Are any decisions made for him and his job?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I'm using my sense of humour because you kind of smiled at me.

**Mr Marchese:** You taught him to swim?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes. He's older than you think.

It's an excellent question. I would hope that no matter what place we play in our roles in government today, all of us here would put our best mind towards how we can best utilize a great teaching resource. The fact is that many of us who have been lucky enough at one time to grow up in the city of Toronto, like myself, and now others around the province rely extensively on the edu-

cation programs, especially for their preschool children and school-aged children, on TVOntario, fondly referred to OECA, the Ontario Education Communications Authority—

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** OK. I don't want to eat into my colleague's time. Thank you, Minister.

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**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Minister, I listened with great interest last week when you answered a question from one of your colleagues about negotiating the training agreement with the federal government. I haven't been here a long time, but I've now grasped that anything that's not done is blamed on the federal government. I have some difficulty with that, because I understand that there's been agreement to negotiate with Mr Klein. I understand there's been agreement—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** With Mr Who?

**Mr Parsons:** Ralph Klein. The Reform Party leader in Alberta. I understand an agreement has been negotiated between the federal government and Mr Bouchard; in fact, all the other nine provinces have an agreement. That perplexes me, that it's the federal government in the wrong, because surely the other nine premiers didn't negotiate an agreement they couldn't live with. I look at that in the context that in a meeting with your officials in August, they indicated to me that it was you who broke off negotiations with the federal government.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Who said that?

**Mr Parsons:** Your officials did at a briefing session in August.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That we broke it off?

**Mr Parsons:** Yes. I stand by that, that it was a statement by your officials at a briefing session.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Did they also say we broke it off because we were in an election?

**Mr Parsons:** Yes, they did.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Good. There was a huge sigh of relief.

**Mr Parsons:** The election's over and in fact we're in December today, so my question to you is, when did you last meet with the federal minister to restart, or do you have a meeting set for the near future? If not, why not?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** We actually did meet towards the end of September-October. Minister Stewart came to London, Ontario. At that time, she was just a new minister. We're hoping to meet—we actually did have a meeting planned for this Monday, but unfortunately I have had to change the date. I recently sent her a letter, which I'm looking for right now—it was with the speech I gave earlier, so I don't know where that file went—and we have asked for another date. I'm hoping we'll be able to do that very quickly.

**Mr Parsons:** Bill 55 has been passed into legislation and I'm getting quite a number of calls from people wanting the regulations. When were the regulations passed for Bill 55, and could you send me some copies?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I'd be happy to send you the copies of the regs. On Bill 55, with regard to the changes

we have made, we spent most of the month of October in consultation with all the sectors that were interested in the regulations to go along with the bill, and we had very successful discussions with them.

**Mr Parsons:** So the regulations are passed?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** They're in the system now and they are moving forward—

**Mr Parsons:** But they're not passed yet?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** —and I would be happy to get you a copy of those.

**Mr Parsons:** They are passed or they're not passed?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** They're not.

**Mr Parsons:** OK. That's really the question. I'm going to try some questions similar to Who Wants to be a Millionaire? that really require just a yes or a no or a final answer?"

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** The answer is yes.

**Mr Parsons:** OK. I will now find a question where that would fit appropriately.

Individual trades have suggested to me that they would like to have the flexibility to increase the minimum grade level required for their trade. Do you agree with them? You said yes before we started.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes, I do, but you were going to mention—

**Mr Marchese:** Let's call the Minister of Labour.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** No, no, don't do that. The answer to that is yes.

**Mr Parsons:** I'll look for another yes question.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I answered all the Millionaire questions with a yes, but carry on.

**Mr Parsons:** That's the problem, see: A, B, C or D is the answer to them.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mr Parsons:** OK. The Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act provides for certified trades and allows for the trade to be designated as compulsory. The construction industry would like to see the criteria for this designation set out in the regulations. Do you agree that that should be, that the criteria for—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Under the TQAA? Yes.

**Mr Parsons:** The construction industry would like to see the establishment of a sectorial advisory council to address issues related to apprenticeship and training.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mr Parsons:** Yes, you're in favour of such a council? Bless you.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** They came in to see me last week.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Sir, you should cross the floor.

**Mr Parsons:** No. The bottom line is I've still got pride.

One issue I've heard much about over the past few months is the issue of allowing all construction apprenticeships to be covered within the same legislation. What's your position on that?



**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** It wouldn't be fair for me to answer with a simple yes, because it didn't happen. So I can't, although I told you I'd say yes to everything.

**Mr Parsons:** What is your position on it?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Right now I think it's more the—

**Mr Parsons:** Oh, I got away from the "yes" questions there. Sorry.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Oh, did you? Good, because that would have been awkward.

I could still say yes, we had wanted it under one piece of legislation, but the industry itself didn't want to be part of Bill 55, so they're under the old legislation. But in meeting with them last week, they advised me that they'll put in writing their position with recommendations. Actually, we had anticipated that we would have had that by now. So we'll wait and see what they're requesting, what their solution is, and at this point in time they'll remain under the old act.

**Mr Parsons:** Do you or your officials have any idea as to the exact number of apprenticeships in each trade in Ontario?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mr Parsons:** You believe you have an exact number?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Well, we think we know what we have, and we also are very happy about the fact that we think we will have very many more young people and persons entering the apprenticeships of different trades in the province of Ontario because of the flexibility that was part of the whole initial reason for having a separate act under Bill 55. You know yourself, Mr Parsons, from your own work in the area and having been so involved in our colleges as well, that there is a huge need for more apprentices, in manufacturing and automotive right across the system.

**Mr Parsons:** I agree, but one of the obstacles right now is the lack of the training agreement. It's a major obstacle.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Yes, and when you look at me like this it makes me nervous, because I can tell you right now that we are totally committed to getting a training agreement. But one of the challenges would be that when one is offered 28% of the funding—that's what's on the table right now—and we've got 40% of our people in—

**Mr Parsons:** I understand that—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** You understand that.

**Mr Parsons:** But I also understand that you're not at the table, while at the same time I'm hearing from employers who can't get people and I'm hearing from people who can't get trained. For them, they view it as a political game.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Who does, the employers?

**Mr Parsons:** The employers and the people who want to be trained.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** The real issue right now has been, in all fairness, that when I became the minister, right away my first phone call was to the former minister, Pierre Pettigrew, and I did not hear back from him until

the end of the summer. Now, I'm not the kind of person who's going to get annoyed about this, because I think you and I both know that there was a change going on there. Now I have Minister Stewart, but since our meeting in London some seven, eight weeks ago, I have been available for a meeting. Unfortunately, this Monday I'm having to change that, and I'm hoping we won't have to wait very much longer than that.

But in the meantime, it isn't that people haven't been getting some work done, because I did at that time leave with Minister Stewart a map which showed the overlap and duplication of programs delivered both by the federal government and by the provincial government. I can tell by the way you're talking today that you understand that, that in Ontario, like in other provinces, we want a seamless delivery system. But just because I've asked not to go up on Monday doesn't mean to say I'm not available Tuesday and every other day.

**Mr Parsons:** And I'm not saying the federal government is without blame on this. But I do know it has gone from June until now, and I talk to employers or employers talk to me and say: "The average age of our employees is 46. We don't have anyone in their 20s working in our trade." And then I see waiting lists of 600 carpenters who want to be trained but there's no training dollars, and I see the Olympic committee putting together a bid and I know the tremendous need that that will generate either by us not having people to do it or by drawing people from out of the country, out of the province, out of the area to do it. For the person waiting to go into apprenticeship and carpentry—a year's gone by.

1750

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's right. I believe too that you would be interested to note that because of legislation the federal government put in place in 1986, they cannot flow direct money to funding programs. So instead of working with us and putting their energy into change all last spring—or since last January, because after all, we have had a number of months at the table—they're now directing money to individuals, which is a new process for them to, I believe, get around having the kind of discussions they should be having with us and settling up.

As a result, your own people who are going to you—I know they are, because they are coming to me too; they've already been to you. They have reduced the training to institutions as of July 1 that have everything to do with training apprentices. They've actually cut that funding. The community-based trainers who have been applying all fall to get funding for very important programs and training of the people you're talking about today have been refused funding. That's the kind of funding, by their own law, that they're not supposed to give, but they can forward that funding to the province of Ontario—I'm trying to keep this simple—and we can then have one integrated training system.

**Mr Parsons:** But the feds are doing a stop-gap measure. My point is that it was your office that broke it off.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I've been sitting here since July 1, and I can tell you right now that I've been available for discussions. I'm the one who's written the letter, and the recent letter that I am sending to Jane—it's probably already in the mail—is that I'm extremely disappointed about Monday—it happens to be personal, and those things happen—but I am available Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday next week and any other day. In fact, we were trying to set up something for this Friday. I have always been available, Ernie, and I hope you'll pass that on.

**Mr Parsons:** I've got to go back and ask one question about Bill 55, though. You indicated that you've had consultation and you're now proceeding to develop the regulations. It begs a question with me, because the people in the trades affected by Bill 55 aren't aware of the consultation. They're asking me if it's ready.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** You'd have to tell me who they are, because I could tell you who I've met with. That is everybody but two groups, who in fact were invited to come and meet with us and didn't. They're not concerned and we have their support.

**Mr Parsons:** Was it by invitation only to consult?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Well, yes, we invited them and they let us know—

**Mr Parsons:** It wasn't an open process.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Why don't we have this described by Joan Andrew, the assistant deputy minister, since she conducted the consultations? Then you'll hear about it and you can go back to whoever you represent.

**The Chair:** For a minute and a half, because the committee has to conduct some business before the House—

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's all right. She can talk faster than I can.

**Ms Joan Andrew:** The invitation included all the chairs and co-chairs of all the provincial advisory committees, which are the industry committees advising us, and then, sector by sector, we invited every member of the industry advisory committees. Then we had meetings with the Ontario Federation of Labour; the auto parts; the Big Three; the colleges; aboriginal groups; local training boards; the CAW; the Labourers' International Union; the tooling and machining association; the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters; and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

**The Chair:** We're going to move to housekeeping. We have 10 minutes before the vote in the House. Thank you, Mr Parsons; thank you, Minister.

I would like, if I could, to get an undertaking, Minister, with you here, from your deputy to follow up on the various things you've promised to the committee as information for the benefit of all the committee members, if that's acceptable, so that this committee will follow up with the deputy for those various information items that you kindly offered to the members of the committee.

Mr Peebles, I see that you're here. I know you have joint ministry responsibilities. We're here reviewing two ministries that used to be one. I wonder if I could ask you to take the same message back to the deputy for education for those matters so that each of the members of the committee will receive the information that was put forward previously.

I'd like to now turn to the vote.

Shall votes 1001 to 1004, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please say "aye." All those opposed, say "nay." I declare the motion carried.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Education and Training carry? All those in favour, say "aye." All those opposed, say "nay." Carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Education and Training to the House? That's carried.

One final piece of business I just want to remark on for the members of this committee. We raised the issue at the beginning of our sitting. We will have accomplished approximately 12 hours and 18 minutes of sitting. For all members of the committee, you should just know that the average for the last number of years is approximately 40 hours. We were artificially limited to these 12 hours and 18 minutes. I want to thank you for your co-operation during this time, but that is the only achievement we were able to obtain this time. After the last election, I'll just remind you, there were 65 hours of sitting by this committee. But thank you for your co-operation.

One thing before I adjourn: There's been a request to table some questions. Minister, a member of the committee, subbing in today, would like to table some questions for your ministry. Would that be acceptable?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's fine.

**The Chair:** OK, so we'll have that done as part of this process. Thank you again, members, for your co-operation.

*The committee adjourned at 1756.*



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### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

#### **Chair / Président**

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Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale PC)

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London L)

#### **Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes**

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain L)

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina ND)

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings PC)

#### **Clerk / Greffière**

Ms Anne Stokes

#### **Staff / Personnel**

Ms Anne Marzalik, researcher, Legislative Research Service



**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 31 May 2000**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 31 mai 2000**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Travaux du comité





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 31 May 2000

Mercredi 31 mai 2000

*The committee met at 1548 in room 228.*

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** Members, I call the meeting to order. We're going to have a business meeting and we hope to expedite that so that all the camaraderie being expressed can continue without delay.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** It's just one great big happy family here.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** It's because we have such a civilized group from Scarborough here.

**The Chair:** Yes, we have high hopes for the heavy representation from Scarborough in terms of the conduct of the meeting.

I'd like to introduce Anne Stokes, who's our clerk of the committee, and Arlene Cedilnik, who's here from Hansard, and to welcome you to the first sitting of the estimates committee for this budget year.

The only business on the agenda is the selection of ministries. As you know, the standing orders provide that there are two rounds by each of the parties. Each gets to choose, for a total of 15 hours, up to two ministries. Without further ado I will turn to the official opposition.

**Mr Bisson:** Just a question, Chairman: When do you expect the business of the committee to start when they are actually here before us?

**The Chair:** We would normally give some notice to the ministries, so we'd be looking at June 13 as our commencement date.

**Mr Bisson:** I just wanted to double-check that it wasn't next week.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I'd like to move, if that's the way it's normally done, that we request the Ministry of the Environment, Minister Newman, and the Minister of Education, Minister Ecker, and we request seven and a half hours for the Ministry of the Environment and seven and a half hours for the Ministry of Education.

**Mr Bisson:** We'd like to suggest that we would split the 15 hours for our first round between the Ministry of Health and the Attorney General.

**The Chair:** Is that a 50-50 split?

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, we'll go for an equal split on both.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** The government would choose the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Labour.

**The Chair:** Your hours portion?

**Mr O'Toole:** That's 7.5.

**Mr Bisson:** Can I just get a recount?

**The Chair:** I'd be happy to do that. We have selection from the government party: tourism and labour equally split at seven and a half hours each. Is that correct, Mr O'Toole?

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, that's right.

**The Chair:** The original selection is environment, 7.5; education, 7.5; and then, for everyone else's benefit, health and Attorney General, and all of the ministries are basically seven and a half hours.

The second round of selection.

**Mr Phillips:** They've taken tourism, which we were interested in. We'd like to request that Management Board appear for seven and a half hours, Minister Hodgson; and municipal affairs and housing for seven and a half hours. Our request would be that that be on the housing portion. I don't know whether that's necessary or not.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** Is there still a Minister of Housing?

**The Chair:** I think the whole ministry will attend, and maybe as a courtesy we could relay that to the ministry at that time. But I think the other parties will also be able to direct whatever questions the estimates will permit. So that will have to be something—

**Mr Curling:** There is a Minister of Housing, though?

**The Chair:** There is a Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and he is now selected to come forward.

**Mr Bisson:** My first pick is to again split it seven and a half hours. The Ministry of Community and Social Services would be one, and if I had to pick another one I guess it would be the Ministry of—boy, this is tough—Northern Development and Mines.

**Mr O'Toole:** We would like to pick the two justice ministries: Solicitor General and correctional services.

**Mr Bisson:** We already did the Attorney General.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, Solicitor General.

**The Chair:** The Solicitor General and correctional services are now separate ministries.

**The Chair:** And in the same division, Mr O'Toole?

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Seven and a half hours each.



I would call a conclusion, then, to the selection of ministries and I'll ask if there is any other business the committee wishes to raise at this time.

**Mr Bisson:** Again, just so we get this clear: CSS and ND, and the pick over here was housing and—

**Mr Phillips:** Management Board of Cabinet.

**The Chair:** Municipal affairs and housing, and Management Board actually preceded that. Perhaps for the benefit of everyone, I'll read it out to make sure that the list is in sequence, because, as you know, that will be how we deal with the ministries: environment, education, health, Attorney General, tourism, labour, Management Board, municipal affairs and housing—

**Mr Bisson:** Can I make a switch to one of our orders then?

**The Chair:** I think, with friendly agreement—this is the selection time.

**Mr Bisson:** The reality is we're not going to get to some of the later ones and I want to make sure one of them comes up. I'd like to switch the AG to community and social services, and put the AG in that spot.

**The Chair:** So instead of Attorney General, you would have health, then Comsoc, and Attorney General would then appear as the choice after northern development and mines?

**Mr Bisson:** Yes. Then after that we would go to MTR and labour, right?

**The Chair:** No, we do not have MTR. Just coming back to the list—oh, pardon me, tourism and recreation.

**Mr Bisson:** Then do we go to both picks again, both picks and both picks, or is it—

**The Chair:** No, we're done. We're at two rounds each. We're allowed to choose up to 12 ministries and we've basically done that now.

**Mr Bisson:** That's not what I'm asking. Once we finish with the Ministry of Labour, which is the sixth ministry to come before this committee, we would then go to housing?

**The Chair:** No. Sorry, I was a little further on the list. I'll just go back so we're all clear: tourism, labour, Management Board, municipal affairs and housing; now, Attorney General, northern development and mines, Solicitor General and correctional services. Those are the sequences, and we've already had for the record, I'm sure, identified which party has selected each.

**Mr Curling:** Mr Chair, the first ministry called will be tourism, the first ministry coming forward?

**The Chair:** No. I was joining the list from where we started. The first ministry is environment. I won't endeavour to do the list again unless there's a specific request for it. Basically, our first four ministries will be environment, education, now health and community and social services.

I'm advised that the detailed estimates will be ready by June 12, so we will anticipate meeting on June 13 and our considerations will go until the following week, June 22. I have been advised that the House leaders are discussing the possibility of some sittings either in August or September. They'll report back on that, I'm sure.

If there is no further business, I'll declare this meeting adjourned. Thank you for your contribution today.

*The committee adjourned at 1556.*











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#### **Chair / Président**

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## **Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

**Tuesday 13 June 2000**

**Wednesday 14 June 2000**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

**Mardi 13 juin 2000**

**Mercredi 14 juin 2000**

## **Standing committee on estimates**

Ministry of the Environment

## **Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Environnement

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 13 June 2000

Mardi 13 juin 2000

*The committee met at 1555 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We are here today for consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment. Welcome, Minister.

We will commence with vote 1101, item 1. We will begin with a 30-minute statement by the minister, a 30-minute statement by the official opposition and a 30-minute statement by the third party. Then the minister will have 30 minutes for a reply. The remaining time of the total 7.5 hours will be apportioned equally among the three parties. Minister, you may commence.

**Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):** Chair, honourable members, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the standing committee on estimates. With me today are my deputy minister, Stien Lal, and Dana Richardson and Carl Griffith, two assistant deputy ministers within the ministry. We're also joined by the ministry's division heads and some of its directors to answer any technical questions that may arise.

I want to begin today by saying that every member of the Ontario Legislature has been deeply moved by the recent very sad events that have unfolded in Walkerton. It's a terrible tragedy that has shaken all of us.

As you know, there are now four inquiries and investigations into the circumstances surrounding Walkerton, including a public inquiry being conducted by Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor of the Ontario Court of Appeal. In light of these investigations, I would ask the indulgence of the members of this committee not to address specific questions that would place in jeopardy the proceedings of these investigations. I am prepared to speak generally to the issues related to water quality and what my ministry has done to ensure the protection of drinking water in Ontario, but I do not feel it is appropriate in these circumstances to get into the specifics of the Walkerton situation.

I want to speak in more detail about the actions we are taking to bring forward a drinking water protection regulation that sets out a clear, strict regime of legal requirements that will have to be followed by operators supplying drinking water in Ontario.

Later in my remarks today, I will focus on our documented results, actions and future directions. You

will hear how, in many areas, we are delivering effective environmental protection and meeting our mandate.

I also have to advise you that, because of a non-confidence motion tomorrow in the Legislature, I will not be at estimates, but my place will be taken by my parliamentary assistant, Toby Barrett.

For the fiscal year 2000-01, \$229.1 million is the proposed allocation for the Ministry of the Environment. The largest share of our resources, \$187 million, is allocated to our major core business, environmental protection. It is this area that I will focus on today.

It is almost trite to say that protecting drinking water is an important goal for all of us. Having said that, there is always room for improvement. As a result, we are taking strong measures to protect drinking water. We are developing a regulation that will make our standards for drinking water protection among the toughest in the world. A draft regulation was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for public comment.

In my original announcement of May 29, the draft regulation included the following mandatory components.

(1) All laboratories, including laboratories at water treatment plants performing tests on drinking water, must be accredited by an agency such as the Standards Council of Canada, which works in tandem with the Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories.

(2) Municipalities must inform the Ministry of the Environment if they change the private laboratory facility that is testing their water. This will ensure that the ministry will contact the new lab and inform it of its role and obligations.

(3) Notification requirements will be made absolutely and unequivocally clear. If any laboratory finds that a test result indicates unsafe drinking water quality, it must immediately inform the Ministry of the Environment and the medical officer of health, as well as the municipal water facility operator.

The ministry will require a municipality to immediately notify all three if they find a problem, and the ministry will require every waterworks to do so itself unless they are sure notification has already taken place.

As you can appreciate, the regulation is still undergoing changes, and I can tell you that there will be several more components, including a provision to ensure that all residents are notified in a timely manner of any problems with their drinking water.

In addition to the draft regulation, the Ministry of the Environment is undertaking an inspection of all municipal water treatment facilities in Ontario over the next six months to ensure that they meet current and new standards.

Second, a review of certificates of approval for all municipal water treatment facilities will be completed. The review will focus on three areas: (1) making sure disinfection is appropriate and adequate, (2) protection of the water supply from contamination and (3) consolidation and updating of all certificates of approval.

With this new approach, each municipal water treatment facility in Ontario will have one new certificate of approval that clearly sets out what is approved, reaffirms the requirements in the new regulation and incorporates appropriate and necessary site-specific conditions for operating the facility.

I want to turn now to the documented improvements in Great Lakes water quality. According to the Third Report of Progress Under the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Ecosystem, the lakes are cleaner than they have been in 50 years. Among the report's highlights:

Ontario's industrial clean water regulations—our municipal-industrial strategy for abatement, or MISA, program—have cut toxic pollutant discharges into Ontario waterways by at least 70%;

One of these regulations, for pulp and paper, has led to an 82% reduction in discharges of chlorinated toxic substances into the Great Lakes. It has also eliminated aqueous discharges of dioxin and furan from this sector;

Significant reductions have also been made in discharges of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, cyanide, zinc, lead and chromium;

Most of the high-level PCBs previously in storage have been destroyed;

Beaches are remaining open longer in Toronto, Hamilton and other lakefront communities.

I should mention here that although the Canada-Ontario agreement has expired, our work continues to achieve the goals of the Canada-Ontario agreement. We are negotiating the renewal of the Canada-Ontario agreement with our federal counterparts, with an eye to improve upon the last agreement, which was signed in 1994.

We're stimulating new partnerships that are investing millions of dollars to continue the vital work of cleaning up, conserving and protecting the Great Lakes and our other water resources through the Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation. The foundation was established with an initial provincial contribution of \$5 million in seed money. This investment has generated several times that amount in the form of in-kind and financial support from other sources. Some of our ongoing Great Lakes work includes lake-wide management plans for each of the Canadian Great Lakes and remedial action plans for each of the 17 areas of concern identified as requiring special cleanups.

I also want to mention, with respect to groundwater, that Ontario will provide \$6 million over three years for a groundwater monitoring network in 38 key watersheds. This includes \$3.6 million allocated in 2000-01. The network will help establish an effective water management and drought response strategy in order to ensure the sustainability of Ontario's water resources.

The network is a partnership effort between the ministry, conservation authorities and local municipalities to measure water levels in more than 350 wells across Ontario, to complete hydrogeologic mapping to show availability of groundwater and to undertake chemical analysis of groundwater samples.

Water treatment is also an important focus of our \$200-million provincial water protection fund or PWPF. This fund was established in 1997 to address local water and sewage treatment problems. That money has funded 91 construction projects and 84 studies. In 1999-2000, the provincial water protection fund funding was accelerated to provide municipalities with the resources they need for water and sewage. To date, this ministry has allocated \$52.8 million in the 2000-01 budget. I am confident that this government's strong commitment to a clean supply of safe drinking water will continue to be seen in future endeavours.

I want to add a few thoughts here with respect to SuperBuild, the Ontario government's five-year, \$20-billion initiative to renew, rebuild and expand public infrastructure. SuperBuild envisions innovative partnerships with municipalities and the private sector to build and improve municipal infrastructure projects and environmental initiatives.

The budget initiatives that are relevant for the Ministry of the Environment are the Millennium Partnerships initiative, which will invest \$1 billion over five years in infrastructure in urban centres, including environmental projects. Also, the Ontario small town and rural development program will provide \$400 million over five years to help rural areas and small cities with infrastructure projects. The ministry will work closely with the SuperBuild Corp to address critical water and sewer infrastructure needs and ensure that priority is given to these.

SuperBuild is a potential source of funding for needed environmental infrastructure work. As well, the province is negotiating with the federal government to use funds from the federal-provincial infrastructure program for Ontario projects.

With respect to cleaner air, protecting and improving air quality in Ontario is an ongoing important priority for the ministry. The ministry's Air Quality in Ontario reports provide us with the indication that we are on the right track. The latest edition of the report, Air Quality in Ontario 1997, shows that steady improvements continue to be made, despite significant growth in population, in vehicle travel and in the economy.

For example, contaminant reductions over the past 10 years include total reduced sulphur compounds, 50%; carbon monoxide reduction, 32%; sulphur dioxide reduc-



tion, 23%; and nitrogen dioxide reduction, 10%. Ontario's air quality index indicates good to very good air quality readings 95.5% of the time. While these are positive developments, the ministry recognizes that major challenges remain in ensuring the quality of air that Ontarians deserve. With this in mind, we are taking action on three fronts to address smog, acid rain and other forms of air pollution.

One of this government's most important initiatives to promote cleaner air is the anti-smog action plan or ASAP. The anti-smog action plan brings together a wide range of partners, including industry associations, companies, government and its agencies, and non-government organizations, to reduce smog-causing emissions, including nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, by 45%. At the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment meeting in Quebec City on June 5 and 6, ministers agreed to Canada-wide standards for ozone and PM 2.5.

Over the past two years, we have worked hard with stakeholders to achieve the 45% reduction goal for nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds by 2015. While the goal was an excellent step towards reducing smog, I decided it was not ambitious enough. We all have to work together to reduce smog, and I believe we can do it. That is why Ontario went to Quebec with a goal in mind: a 45% reduction five years earlier and a commitment from the federal government to obtain the same commitments from the US Environmental Protection Agency. This will be a significant contribution to our fight against smog.

Another key element of our fight against smog is our anti-smog actions of the Drive Clean program, which has a \$24-million allotment in these estimates. Drive Clean targets the number one domestic source of smog-causing pollutants, the automobile. It is achieving impressive results to date. Since Drive Clean testing began in April 1999, more than a million and a half cars and light-duty trucks have been tested. During Drive Clean's first year, we estimate that smog-causing emissions from cars and trucks were reduced by an estimated 6.7% in the two program areas, those being the Greater Toronto area and the Hamilton-Wentworth region.

The reductions we've achieved have been accomplished with the program covering less than a third of the more than five million cars that will be covered when the program is in full operation in 2004. We're on target for a 22% reduction in smog-related emissions from vehicles in the program areas by that time. We're also achieving reductions in smog-causing pollutants through the testing of more than 200,000 heavy-duty trucks and buses each year across the province.

Inspections and repairs under the Drive Clean program are complemented by the Smog Patrol, which targets grossly polluting vehicles on Ontario's roadways.

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We're actively recruiting facilities for phase two of Drive Clean, which will see the program extended to urban areas from Peterborough to Windsor, as well as the

Niagara Peninsula. The equipping and accreditation of facilities will be continuing until October 2000, when the first notices go out to motorists. Mandatory testing will begin in January 2001.

We are looking into ways to require oil companies to post their sulphur content. This will give motorists the knowledge they need to make environmentally sensitive choices.

With respect to the moratorium on the sale of coal-fired electricity plants, one of the Ontario government's most significant challenges is ensuring that environmental protection remains front and centre as we create a more competitive electricity market in Ontario. This is why I recently announced a moratorium on the sale of coal-fired generation plants.

Ministry staff are reviewing the effects of individual stations, as well as the environmental controls in place. We are developing options to improve these controls and to ensure that the environment and our air are protected before any of these plants change hands. Options that will be examined include, but are not limited to, conversion to different fuels, especially natural gas; limits on emissions from individual stations; and requirements for particular emission abatement technologies.

This past January, we announced a series of new actions to protect Ontario's air. These actions include monitoring and reporting regulations as well as emissions limits. Ontario electricity producers make up the first sector subject to our new monitoring and reporting requirements. As of May 1, 2000, all electric power generation companies and their facilities in Ontario's electricity sector must report annually on emissions of nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide as well as other substances including mercury and carbon dioxide. Larger generators, which are defined as facilities producing more than 25 megawatts, must use continuous emission monitors for emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>. All facilities will be required to submit annual emissions reports, as well as quarterly reports on smog-related emissions.

We're also developing a regulation for the industrial, commercial and municipal sectors. It will require the monitoring and reporting of some 357 airborne contaminants, and we expect the regulation to take effect January 1, 2001.

A proposed regulation to make all private and public sector electric facilities subject to the Environmental Assessment Act has been posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for public comment. To date, the act has applied only to projects undertaken by public sector organizations. Under the new requirements, assessments will be triggered by the environmental significance of an electricity project, rather than by whether the proposal is from the public or private sector.

In addition to creating a level playing field, our new standards will further prompt the electricity industry to consider alternative sources, thereby increasing business opportunities for all energy producers. This is where alternative energy sources such as natural gas can truly make an environmental difference.



With respect to emission limits, the electricity sector will also be the first sector to be subject to emissions caps. The government is setting a cap on the level of emissions to be allowed from electricity generators for 2001 and beyond. Caps will be lowered over time to ensure the sector contributes its fair share to meeting the target. The ministry will impose limits on emissions from other industrial and institutional sources in the coming years.

The government has also set long-range targets of a 50% reduction by 2015 in SO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the current limit set under Countdown Acid Rain. The countdown program was established in 1986 to require Inco Ltd, Falconbridge Ltd, Algoma Steel Inc's ore division at Wawa and Ontario Hydro to reduce their combined sulphur dioxide emissions. The limit set in 1994 was a maximum of 665 kilotonnes, which is a 52% reduction from the 1986 limit.

With respect to emissions reduction trading, along with January's announcement of monitoring and reporting regulations and emissions limits, the ministry has proposed an emissions reduction trading program. This provides incentives for companies to find ways to remain even further below the caps.

Emissions performance standards were also announced. Effective January 2001, the government will implement emissions performance standards for electricity generators in Ontario and for generators outside Ontario selling into our province. This will ensure that even imported electricity that is used in Ontario is produced in compliance with the province's tough new emissions standards.

As I mentioned a moment ago, vehicles are the number one domestic source of smog-causing pollutants. More than half of Ontario's smog originates from US sources. In some areas of Ontario, US emissions can be as high as 90%. We are pressing our case with our American neighbours. Ontario made a written submission to the US Court of Appeal in July 1999 and made oral presentations in November 1999 in support of anti-smog efforts by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA had called for the reduction of transboundary movement of ground-level ozone and nitrogen oxides from several US states. The court ruled in favour of the EPA in March of this year.

Right now, ministry staff are in Washington supporting the federal government in its negotiations for an ozone annex.

Another issue that we're dealing with is climate change. Global climate change is another transboundary issue being addressed by the ministry. Ontario is a leader in the Canadian efforts to address global climate change. The province has established a climate change fund to develop provincial actions and spur all sectors, including governments, industries, communities and individuals, to find the most effective ways to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Our monitoring and reporting regulations cover emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is a key contributor to climate change.

The ministry's air protection programs have multiple benefits. For example, fighting smog leads to the reduction of greenhouse gases. Reductions and releases of NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> will also lead to reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

A year of Drive Clean has led to an estimated reduction of 18,500 tonnes in emissions of carbon dioxide and, as I indicated earlier, greater reductions will be realized as this program expands.

Ontario is leading by example in the fight against smog. We have set a target to reduce climate-change-related emissions by 40% in 2000. We have passed the 32% mark and are well on our way to exceeding the 40% goal.

These actions to improve air quality are complemented by better methods for informing the public about the state of their air. The air quality Ontario initiative was launched May 1, 2000, to provide Ontarians with expanded information about current and forecast air quality. The initiative will run each year during peak smog season between May 1 and September 30. During that time, the ministry will provide a two-tier, air-quality forecast that will provide up to three days' notice when poor air quality is predicted. Since May 1, when the initiative was launched, there have been more than 370,000 hits on the Web site devoted to providing air quality information.

Air quality Ontario builds on the more than \$5 million in government investments since 1995 to upgrade the province's air monitoring infrastructure. This unprecedented investment in air monitoring enables state-of-the-art emergency-response capability, establishes a new smog alert program and allows dissemination of air quality data to the public through several media, including the Internet.

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Investments include \$3.5 million for a new telemetry system which allows the rapid retrieval of air quality data from 74 continuous air monitoring stations across the province and for state-of-the-art air analyzers. There's \$1.5 million for a new mobile air quality index unit and two new mobile trace atmospheric gas analyzers.

With respect to waste diversion results, I'd like to turn to our conservation stewardship initiatives, another core business of the ministry. One of the ministry's main objectives is helping achieve a 50% reduction for diversion of municipal solid waste, and we're seeing strong results today. The ministry expects that as we report on our progress for 1998, Ontario will be close to a waste reduction rate of 40% per capita.

Here are some of the achievements that have been made between 1994 and 1998: Municipalities increased their total waste diversion rate from 860,000 tonnes to more than 1.25 million tonnes. Diversion of organic materials through backyard and central composting increased by 57% and municipal participation in centralized composting is up 55% since 1994. Central composting programs currently divert some 290,000 tonnes of organic waste annually. Six thousand tonnes of household special waste was collected and safely

managed. Blue box recycling has grown by 43%, from 450,000 tonnes to 650,000 tonnes.

Today, Ontario municipalities provide blue box and other waste diversion services for more than 90% of Ontario's population; 99% of single-family homes in Ontario are served by the blue box and other waste diversion initiatives. As well, some 1.1 million backyard composters have been distributed to residences.

The Ontario government is committed to the long-term sustainability of the blue box and other municipal waste reduction initiatives.

With this in mind, we formed the Waste Diversion Organization, or WDO. The WDO is a voluntary partnership of industries, municipalities, the Recycling Council of Ontario and the province, and I'm pleased to report that it is indeed up and running. The WDO will provide municipalities with the funding and tools they need to drive greater waste diversion to meet and potentially exceed the 50% waste reduction goal and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the blue box and other waste diversion initiatives.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have one minute, Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The key objective of the WDO is to develop a long-term sustainable funding plan, including up to 50% of the net operating costs of the blue box program.

We've had other actions as well to conserve and protect resources. There are new standards under the Environmental Protection Act for new and expanding landfill sites that are among the toughest in North America. We've also had a six-point action plan to deal with the Taro site in Hamilton. We immediately amended two parts of the regulation. Three further amendments are being consulted on. As well, certificates of approval at a number of sites in the province have been changed.

I would like to turn to a matter which the opposition likes to talk about endlessly; namely, the reductions to the ministry's staff and budget and their alleged impact on our ability to do the job. I would like a moment to set the record straight.

**The Vice-Chair:** If you can do it in 30 seconds, it's fine.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Over the last decade we've seen many changes in the ministry's programs, but a focus on compliance has always been maintained. It is important to look at the historical trends to see the functions that have been retained and how, as programs change, staff numbers and functions have also changed. It is very important that we all know the facts. I propose to outline the exact way in which reductions to the ministry's budget have been applied.

Let me say upfront that in 1995-6 the compliance function had 961 staff positions and \$71.9 million. Today this critical activity has 741 staff and \$63.4 million; a decrease of about 10% in funding compared with an overall ministry funding reduction of 44%.

The Ministry of the Environment now focuses on policy, standard setting, compliance and enforcement.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. There is a quorum call in the House for those who choose to go.

The next 30 minutes will be allotted to the official opposition, Mr Bradley.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Thank you very much. One almost doesn't know where to start in the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment. This is the fourth minister, I think, in the Harris government who has had to go through this procedure, because they keep changing ministers for some reason or another.

The most condemning page I can find in the estimates is indeed what we call page 7, which deals with the fact that the government has made massive cuts to the Ministry of the Environment budget. In the category of administration, it is up 1.6%; environmental protection, down 4%; conservation and stewardship, down almost 13%; infrastructure development, down 77%; ministry total operating capital, down 43.7%.

That tells the story itself because if you want a ministry to be successful, if it's a Ministry of the Environment, the minister requires the resources and the staff to be able to do this. This ministry, since the Harris government has taken office, has been cut in its budget by over 40% and has had approximately one third of the staff fired out the door. In addition to this, it has had, let's say, its clout within government reduced considerably because many in the government were elected on the basis that they were going to get the Ministry of the Environment out of people's faces.

I can tell you that's one promise this government has kept, getting the Ministry of the Environment out of the faces of some of the polluters in this province, people who did not believe that the rules and regulations we had in this province were to apply to them because they would affect their business adversely in some way or other. In fact, it was ironic that we had the Red Tape Commission re-established under the co-chairmanship of the member for London, Mr Wood, and the former member for Lincoln, Mr Frank Sheehan. Of course, red tape is often something that people who don't like the Ministry of the Environment try to eliminate. I think we should have a green tape commission, which in fact puts in place regulations designed to protect the environment instead of constantly removing them at the behest of those who have never wanted to comply with the rules and regulations of the Ministry of the Environment.

That page in itself, the overall budget cuts, tells us once again what the priority of this government is because neither this minister nor any other minister can do the job without the appropriate staff, without the appropriate funding and without the clout.

I am very concerned as well when I hear ministry officials are told to be "business friendly." That doesn't take much of a translation. That means, "Don't get in the face of business." You cannot set up a ministry that was established, that was once strong, that had clout within this government, and then turn around and make it a ministry with little clout, with little action within gov-



ernment itself, that gets elbowed aside by other ministries, that has pressure placed on it by people in the private sector who don't want to comply with what they consider to be rules and regulations and legislation that are unreasonable. I can tell you that good corporate citizens don't worry about that. Good corporate citizens are people who want the Ministry of the Environment and the government to have tough rules and regulations enforced in a thorough manner.

If you look at the number of prosecutions that have taken place and the penalties that have been applied by the Ministry of the Environment, they're down considerably. That doesn't mean that everybody has suddenly become an angel. That means this government simply is not pursuing, as it should, the kinds of violations of provincial laws that are obviously happening. As well, they don't have the staff to watch out for those violations and to respond to citizen complaints, which often tell us eventually where those violations are.

We have regional offices that have been significantly changed. Some of them are changed from regional offices to area offices or district offices. One thing is consistent, they have less money and fewer people working in those offices to respond to problems. In every community we have difficulty now in responding to problems. The solution was for the ministry simply to fob some of that off on municipalities and say, "We don't do this any more" or simply not be able to respond. I don't blame the people who work for the Ministry of the Environment. We have so many dedicated people, who once had a lot of enthusiasm about dealing with environmental problems and challenges in this province, who today are dispirited, as you see from various quotes from people in the ministry who speak anonymously, in fear of being somehow reprimanded.

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We know the new rules and regulations you put people through now who want to answer questions of members of the Legislature or others. They have to go through several hoops now so that there's no embarrassment of the minister and of the government. Those people should be able to respond to members on the governing side or members of the opposition side as individuals and not have to have it threaded through the minister's office.

I'm concerned about the investigations and enforcement branch, the number of people in it and the independence of that branch. It should be totally independent from the rest of the ministry. It should be in the business of investigating and enforcing and not of cajoling and persuading. That is its role. It is there to enforce rules and regulations.

The minister does not want to talk about the Walkerton situation because he says there's an inquiry on. That will not prevent us from asking questions. Whether the minister answers or not is another matter. But it was a situation waiting to happen. You cannot place the province at risk by taking away so many staff and so many resources. The chickens will come home to roost when that happens.

I know it's a fundamental difference in philosophy, whether you believe that public services should be financed from the taxes. I know taxes are never popular. I understand that. But you know you made a significant choice as a government and this ministry felt the consequences of that, of giving away massive tax cuts before the budget was balanced and continuing to give away money and massive tax cuts. I understand the philosophy and I respect people who enunciate and defend that philosophy. I understand. That's one side of the issue. I think a growing number of people in Ontario recognize that you cannot place us at risk by continuing to take away funding and resources from public services that are provided, such as those by the Ministry of the Environment.

In the case of Walkerton, some of the remedies the minister has mentioned are really after the horse is out of the barn: "We're going to solve all these problems now." One has to ask why the government abandoned those responsibilities before. I don't hold the present minister accountable for all of this. He's new to the office and he has to answer for other ministers and he has to answer for the whole government. That's why, Minister, through the Chair of the committee, I said to you in the House today, I think it's important that you make it clear to the Premier and the rest of cabinet who aren't on your side in terms of expenditures that you need the resources and the staff to do the job and, second, that you shouldn't be bullied into having privatization of water and sewer services across this province.

I know it's happening now. I know there are people from municipalities who gather sometimes in Toronto and they get that—I can't remember his name. He's the former deputy mayor of Indianapolis. He's a guru that the Fraser Institute brings in, the guru of privatization of municipal services, and he tells them, "Oh, you get your people who are public servants to bid against the private sector and you get a better price and so on." The municipalities are already doing that because they know the pressure is on them from the provincial government. I hope that you will, Mr Minister, express your strong opposition to that as I asked you in the House this afternoon.

I look at the present circumstances with water treatment plants. There's no way on earth that you can properly inspect with properly qualified staff all of those water treatment and sewage treatment plants in this province within six months. You can't do it. We recognize that sewage treatment plants are also very significant because they are there to try to prevent the contamination from getting into the waterways. The water treatment plants need a lot of work. We would know if we had the results of the drinking water surveillance program. We used to put that out yearly. It's a good program that should have been expanded on a yearly basis. The auditor suggested about 25 plants a year, I think—you'll correct me if I'm wrong—but a number of plants a year should be added to the drinking water surveillance program.



If you don't have the results for people, they're going to be suspicious. Surely people have the right to those results. As I see it, there's one of two options: Either you have the results and you're hiding them or you couldn't possibly have the results because you didn't have the staff to gather those results; in other words, the work couldn't be done because you didn't have the staff. It's one of the two. As a minister, I feel sympathetic to you if you didn't have the staff to do that and to be able to produce those reports. Then we can all go, each one of us, to our local municipalities and say, "What the heck are you doing to solve this problem?" and, "You apply resources to it," and they're usually happy to comply, particularly if they can get some financial assistance from the provincial government.

I heard you talk about the Canada-Ontario Great Lakes agreement. I should say before that that when we get into the details of it, I'll have several detailed questions about water treatment in this province, because I think it's inadequate. We're in the year 2000. We have all kinds of new equipment that's available, new processes that are available, scientific evidence which is up to date. To think that we have plants that don't have water filtration, for instance, that simply take it from a pipe and chlorinate it and put it through some kind of minimal process and have it as drinking water, without the proper filtration systems which get rid of such things as cryptosporidium—it's appalling that in the year 2000 we do not have that in place as we should have. But you can't be cutting and providing that at the same time, because municipalities will need the support for that, not down 77% and a big fat zero next year.

And I know what happened with the SuperBuild program. Now they'll say we'll get environmental projects out of it, but I think when the Ontario water and sewer people went to that particular program they were told to take a hike, that it wasn't going to be a priority from that program. I wish you well, Minister, now in securing some of the funds from that program, because you're sure as heck going to need it, and so will the municipalities.

I look at the MISA program, the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement, which was commenced in the late 1980s. You had to drag a lot of people over the coals over that, I'll tell you, including some people who should know better who had to be dragged over the coals on that particular program. It was a good program that I'm glad continues to be implemented. The problem, as I see it, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, is that the municipal part of it has not been as assiduously dealt with as the industrial part. In other words, I don't know how many municipalities of the smaller variety are able to actually keep track of what's dumped into that sewer system and eventually makes its way into the waterways. We do know as well that sewage treatment plants can't handle some of those more exotic substances that are dumped in there.

I ask the question of what the heck you're doing about hospital waste now, biomedical waste—always a good

question. The media forgot to ask that question to you; I forgot to ask that question to you. Biomedical waste is a big issue, and what are you doing with that at the present time? We're going to be looking at some of that. Are there new ways of treating it? Are there better ways of treating it today? That's something that was not mentioned, and I'm sure you will have an answer to that.

The Countdown Acid Rain program was a very ambitious program that was used to significantly reduce—the goal was two thirds—sulphur dioxide emissions in Ontario. It was also great to use that as clout, when you're going to Washington or somewhere else, to persuade our American friends. Unfortunately, I had the embarrassment of going to a press conference in Buffalo yesterday where there was a sign unveiled about Ontario smog going to Buffalo. It's coming from Nanticoke. The Nanticoke coal-fired plant is the largest coal-fired plant in North America in megawatts. It has less than adequate pollution abatement equipment on it. My understanding is that it has some kind of low-NO<sub>x</sub> burners on it. I don't know if it has any sulphur dioxide emissions on it. But the best technology there is selective catalytic reduction. It should be placed on that immediately and it should be converted to gas, as should the other plants in Ontario. I know it costs money, I know it does, but pollution also costs us a lot of money and costs lives. The Ontario Medical Association estimates 1,800 people die prematurely each year of respiratory problems.

The privatization and downloading: I'm very concerned about shoving some of that thing to the municipalities. I found interesting your answer on OCWA, a provincial agency, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. I asked you the question; you didn't give me an answer in the House. You came outside of the House and you said, "No, we're not doing it." They asked the Premier when he was at his extravaganza at the SkyDome the next day and he said, "Well, if the offer's good enough, we're going to sell it." I suggest there's a battle going on in government. I hope you're on the side of not selling off OCWA to the private sector, to the people who are waiting like vultures to move in and take over water to make a profit on it. Lots of things should have a profit made on them. Water is not one.

I'm concerned about the approvals and environmental assessment legislation. You know, you brag about this to businesses in the US. You say, "We've streamlined the approvals and assessment process." "Streamlined" means, sir, that you've made it easier, and that has consequences for the province.

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Let's see what else we have: air pollution warnings. Well, I think we know we have air pollution out there. What we need is more action to actually reduce, not just have the companies monitor, because I have to ask, who's monitoring the monitors? That's another significant problem. You have to have the people who go in, on an unannounced basis, fairly frequently, to monitor the monitors so they're not just giving you some story about what they're producing when in fact what they're

producing is something more dangerous for the environment. Unless you have a crack team to go in and do that, you open the chance for companies to do that, for polluters to do that.

In terms of sulphur and gas, you have jurisdiction. In British Columbia, they deal with sulphur and gas. They require certain rules on sulphur and gas. Just as you control volatile organic compounds in gas, you can also control sulphur. So if you don't like what the feds are doing, you don't have to call a press conference to point fingers the day your budget is in trouble, when you get bad news about your budget. The best thing to do, then, is to implement it yourself, and I'll be there to support you when you do it. I'll stand and applaud in the Legislature, I promise you. That I will.

So coal-fired plants provide a problem. What else can I say about what you've said? I take a good look at what's happening at Inco right now. I'm not convinced that Inco is as we would like it to be at the present time, and I hope you will take a careful look at the opacity problems at Inco, in particular if they're still meeting—because they were a good-news story—their requirements.

You cannot go into the US courts unless you have clean hands. They just laugh at you if you do. You have to have a strong case. You have to show sweeping changes being made. In New York state now, the Governor, a good Republican, as you people would know, Governor Pataki, is requiring of coal-fired plants much more stringent rules than you're applying in Ontario, and so is Mr Spitzer, who is a person in charge of that.

What else can I say? I think you've abandoned municipalities in terms of waste diversion. I don't think there's much in the way of money, if any, going to municipalities to assist them in that regard.

You've lost responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I wish it would go back to your ministry, because that is an environmental gem. If you turn that over to the Ministry of Natural Resources, you're not going to have the same control. I can see by the appointments to the commission that there's a different attitude at the Niagara Escarpment Commission now that it's been shunted over to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

I look at the water treatment problems. As I say, I want to get into the details on that, because I think the people of this province will be very surprised at what's going on. The other day you were asked for a list of municipalities that had trouble with their water treatment system. You refused to give that list. I don't know why you refused to give it. You talked about it being history. Well, if it's history, tell us what the history was and tell us how they corrected it. If they didn't correct it, then that in itself is valuable information for the public to know. I am, on behalf of the people of Ontario, demanding that you provide that information. People shouldn't have to go to freedom of information, such as the Sierra Legal Defence Fund had to do to come out with the report called *Who's Protecting Our Water?*, the so-called

annual discharge report, where we find out what's being discharged in our waterways. We should not have to have people pay and be delayed to get information which should be readily available to the public.

I would like to know what's happening with well water in this province. I suspect there's very little happening. For instance, when you go along the 401, in one of those stations that we stop at to get gasoline and perhaps food, where do they get their water from? Who tests that water? How safe is that water? It doesn't always come from municipal water supplies. It often comes from their own systems. We have to know where that water is coming from.

We would like to know what happens with those sewage treatment plants. How many of those are in and out of compliance? Are municipalities investing the money they should in there, and are you assisting them to do so in a generous manner? I think you should be, because that's extremely important.

What about the certification and training of the operators? Do they all have a card of certification, everybody who's operating a water treatment and sewage treatment plant? I'll go back to a question: When you're going to do this crash across Ontario, I'd like to know where you're going to get the people, because you broke up those teams in the ministry that used to have specific responsibility for assessing water treatment plants. They don't go in for 15 minutes and whip through it. Your ministry officials will tell me how long it takes. It probably takes four or five days to do a very strong assessment of it, to do a report on each one of these. You've got to have qualified people to do it. You can't just haul people out of an office who don't have the specific qualifications to do it. You have to have people who are specialists in the field, who know how to examine those plants. I'm convinced you don't have those.

I'm convinced there's a reason you're not producing the drinking water surveillance program reports for us. I gave you your options before: either you're hiding it or you didn't have the staff to produce it and you don't have it. But there is no excuse for not producing that list of municipalities and drinking water systems now out of compliance. I think the people of this province are entitled to know. I think then remedial action will be taken by those municipalities, by private sector people who are operating it, by OCWA or by whomever if the public happens to know that. And here you are: You were asked in the House by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday and you were asked in the media scrum after, and you refuse to give that particular information.

I'm interested in why you ended up dumping the Ministry of the Environment labs. I thought they were very good. Specifically to the Walkerton case, if there's a direct link—I personally believe that had a Ministry of the Environment lab got that information, they would have told the medical officer of health so fast it would make your head spin, because they would have seen the kind of *E. coli* that was infecting that particular system.



So I'm wondering why you decided to get out of the business of Ministry of the Environment laboratories and I think maybe Ministry of Health laboratories—but I can't hold you accountable for those or ask you about those, but you might offer some information on that as well, because they were very, very helpful.

I look at, overall within the water treatment department, the people you cut, the specific people you cut—there were figures provided, and we'll talk about those figures in detail later—and how you can do the job if you cut those people. One area where I think you have increased staff, because I've been reading, I don't know whether in *Topical* or the *Globe and Mail* or what—but I've been seeing all the people you're hiring in the communications business. There's lots of communications advertising out there, either spin doctors or whatever they are. I don't know what they are; maybe they're speech writers or something. But you seem to be—maybe I'm wrong, and you'll tell me I'm wrong—hiring a lot of those folks while you're turfing other people out the door.

I'll be interested as well in how you respond to what orders you've given to Ministry of the Environment officials now when an MPP or a member of the news media calls the office, how those orders might have differed from what they might have been before Walkerton, because it's much more difficult to ferret out information about specific problems from Ministry of the Environment officials today than it was before Walkerton. That's most unfortunate, because I think it's important that any one of us, whether it's a government member or an opposition member or a member of the news media, has an opportunity to get that information, bring the issue forward and have you address it. You may have an excellent answer for it or you may say, "I don't have an answer, but here's how I'm going to respond to something that's brought to my attention." That's fine if you do it that way, but I don't think you can muzzle or at least hold back Ministry of the Environment officials until the news is stale or until you've fixed the problem and found a spin for the answer to that particular problem.

I would like to know when you would anticipate that the drinking water surveillance program would be extended to every plant in Ontario. I understand that's an ongoing program that's spun out over a number of years. I didn't expect when you got in that you were going to announce they were all there the next day. That would be unfair and unrealistic, and I don't want to be unfair and unrealistic with you. I would like to have a list of those municipalities, not just the ones that you've identified have had problems, but the ones that do not meet the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. I'd like to have that list presented to us. Those are the ones I talked about that have, in my view and in the view of many people, inadequate water processing systems that may have been OK 50 years ago, but we've got a lot of population out there now and a lot of industry and so on, and that's important.

The issue of land use is an extremely important one. I think of the Oak Ridges moraine. I would hope that as minister you would be advocating a freeze on development on the Oak Ridges moraine. It's a gem, a real gem. It has the headwaters of so many rivers and streams coming into so many municipalities represented by people on this committee and others, and to see that placed in jeopardy by development which is unwise I think would be something we should not allow. I'm concerned about the disappearance of farmland, and as Minister of the Environment you have a certain responsibility there. I know the Minister of Agriculture probably has the lead, but as I see this urban sprawl taking place outside of major metropolitan centres, I'm extremely concerned as we gobble up all the good farmland. I see it certainly in the Niagara Peninsula, as there are some people who will not be satisfied until they've paved every last square centimetre from Toronto to Fort Erie. Then they'll be happy. That will be the ultimate; that will be paradise.

1650

To me that's not paradise, and I would hope that you, as Minister of the Environment, would advocate in favour of strong planning rules. In fact, I wish you would revert to the planning rules that the previous government brought in. I'm one who gives credit to people. Some of the things the Conservatives did years ago were good as well, and I think some of the things you're going to do are going to be positive.

The NDP changed the rules of this province. I know the developers hated it, but I'm going to tell you that I thought a lot of those rules that came out of a committee—and there was a heck of a lot of consultation—were very good, because they made us pause and look at the consequences of unfettered development before allowing it to take place. Upon reflection, I hope the government would look carefully at that.

I hope when you look at the Ministry of Natural Resources that you would advocate on behalf of your fellow minister as well. Some people here who have been in municipal politics I suspect have served on conservation authorities. I understand it's not within the purview of your ministry, but as an advocate for the environment, I believe that the Minister of the Environment should be advocating on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources to get its funding and staff restored for those programs which are there to protect water, and conservation authorities as well, which have been virtually annihilated by cuts from this government. I'd like to see that funding restored to those particular bodies, which I think did a good job of trying to protect us from problems such as the waste that comes off farmland, comes off industrial land, comes off residential land. They're very good as a commenting authority when a subdivision proposal has been brought forward. I think that would be extremely important in that regard.

I look at the Great Lakes. You mentioned, for instance, that you're pleased that they seem to be cleaned up. I suggest that there's just not as much water testing



going on at this time to determine what is going on. I remember hearing I think a reliable source saying that there had been a lot of that removed, a lot of water testing that had been removed that was there before. I hope some of the measures that have been taking place will indeed help clean up the Great Lakes.

In some of our municipalities which are more urban, when we have what is called a 30-year or 50-year storm and the sewage treatment plant gets bypassed, I hope the government would help to finance retention tanks that would take that water which would normally be flowing to the sewage treatment plant and which bypasses it in the big storm—you just let her rip into the lake or into the stream—that you would fund retention tanks which would allow that rainwater to be retained as long as possible before it is put through a sewage treatment plant.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have less than a minute.

**Mr Bradley:** So, Mr Minister, I put many challenges before you. I wish you well. I'm not a person who is malicious in dealing with other ministers; I have a sympathy for ministers. I simply wish you well, and you can be assured of my support and that of the official opposition if you are campaigning to get the necessary funds and resources and staff to accomplish what we have suggested you might want to accomplish.

**The Vice-Chair:** The third party has 30 minutes.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Chair, I'm going to launch right into questions of the minister, because I have a number of questions. In fact, there won't be enough time for me to have all of my questions answered.

The first question I want to ask the minister is, were you aware that your staff, your assistant deputy minister for operations, wrote memos as early as 1996 advising that staff cuts would necessitate—

**Hon Mr Newman:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: Is it not the procedure that if the NDP is choosing not to go with opening comments, we would then go to my rebuttal to the two opposition parties?

**The Vice-Chair:** I think it's appropriate, as I was checking with the clerk, that they can ask questions within that time.

**Mr Hampton:** This is our time, and we'd like to ask some questions.

**Hon Mr Newman:** OK. I just wanted to clarify things.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll start again. Were you aware that your staff, your assistant deputy minister for operations, wrote memos as early as 1996 advising that staff cuts would necessitate a reduction in service by the Ministry of the Environment, specifically the operations branch, which is charged with enforcement and inspection? Were you aware of that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you aware that in January of this year Ministry of the Environment staff wrote a memo advising that the protocol for reporting serious contamination problems with drinking water was obsolete?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Can you just repeat the question one more time, please?

**Mr Hampton:** Were you aware that in January of this year your own staff wrote a memo advising that the protocol for reporting serious contamination problems with drinking water was obsolete?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I was not aware of that working document.

**Mr Hampton:** When you were sworn in as Minister of the Environment, were you briefed by senior officials in the ministry about problems with the protocol for reporting serious contamination problems with drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No.

**Mr Hampton:** You're telling us that the ministry officials didn't tell you, when you were sworn in as minister, about their concerns, issues they had raised internally in January of this year, concerning the protocol for serious contamination problems with drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can again tell you that was a working document that was not brought to senior management.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to ask the question specifically again: When you were sworn in as Minister of the Environment and you were given briefings as Minister of the Environment, you're saying that you were not told about serious problems with the protocol for reporting contamination problems with drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think I have answered that question.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you aware prior to yesterday afternoon's question period that Ministry of the Environment officials knew about E coli in the Rocklyn drinking water in February and were telling citizens in Rocklyn that the Ministry of the Environment could not go to investigate until later on this spring, because they didn't have time?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I knew yesterday.

**Mr Hampton:** Yesterday was the first you heard of it?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I answered your question. Yes.

**Mr Hampton:** Despite the fact this was raised in February, the ministry knew of it in February?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked your deputy minister to determine if there are other situations like Rocklyn where your staff in the ministry are telling people they cannot investigate contaminated drinking water because they don't have time? Have you asked your deputy minister about that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We're investigating anywhere that there is—

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked your deputy minister?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered the question.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I am very interested in the line of questioning; I think it's more appropriate for the inquiry that's going on. In the estimates process, it's my view, we're at a policy level, and he is actually doing an inquisition, a

media inquisition, in my view, and I would ask you to rule if it's inappropriate to have him specifically asking questions on Walkerton. His questions are specific to a public inquiry, and I wonder if that's appropriate for this particular committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** The third party has 30 minutes in which to put their case, and they may choose to do that. The minister may choose not to—

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood):** The cover-up continues.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. He may choose not to answer.

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Chair, I take exception to the tone of the person saying, "The cover-up continues." On what basis do you make that assumption? Through the Chair, she has made a statement on the public record.

**Mr Hampton:** Chair, I'd like to ask my question. If Mr Newman has something to hide—

**Mr O'Toole:** You have made a public statement that it's a cover-up, and I take exception to that tone. You know nothing of what you speak.

**Mr Hampton:** Chair, if you don't mind, I'm going to ask my questions. If the government wants to try to shut us down, let them try and do that.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Mr O'Toole:** Nobody is shutting you down, but I—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O'Toole, you asked me a question, and I'm trying to respond. I don't like the fact that you're having arguments back and forth. You asked me a question as the Chair, and I'm trying to respond. I have responded. The third party has 30 minutes in which to put their questions, and the minister may choose to—

**Hon Mr Newman:** The role of the Chair is to be impartial. You made a comment a moment ago with reference to me not answering questions. I have answered questions here to the best of my ability. You made reference specifically to questions not being answered, and I would like an apology from you for that.

1700

**The Vice-Chair:** I don't see why I have to apologize. I said you may choose to do—

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, that's not what you said, Chair. You said, "If you're not answering the questions," and you can review Hansard.

**The Vice-Chair:** I will rule on that. Minister, I said that you may choose to answer the question the way you want to. I did not say you did not. So may we proceed? I will roll the clock back two minutes.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, I want to ask you a question about your report. In your report you admit today that the compliance part of the ministry, the operations part of the ministry—this is on page 13 of 16—had 961 staff positions in 1995-96, and this critical activity has 741 staff positions now. That's a reduction of at least 220 staff positions in the operations division. That's a reduction of 23%. So you're admitting here today that in fact you have cut 23% of the staff from the operations division which was responsible for enforcement and

inspection. Those are your own figures, sir. You're admitting that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I just want to find the page.

**Mr Hampton:** Page 13 of 16.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You'll appreciate the fact that I'm working from a different copy than what you have.

**Mr Hampton:** It's under the title "Staff and Budget Reductions." It is the fifth paragraph.

**Hon Mr Newman:** How does the paragraph start?

**Mr Hampton:** "Let me say upfront that in 1995-96 the compliance function had 961 staff positions." It now has 741. That's a reduction of 220 and a reduction of 23%.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I just want to explain that for a second. It's not a simple yes or no. It was 961 staff positions and \$71.9 million in 1995-96; today, 741 staff, \$63.4 million. That's a decrease in funding of about 10% compared with the overall ministry reduction of 44%.

**Mr Hampton:** And it's a reduction in staff for enforcement and inspection of 220, which works out to a 23% reduction.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, the—

**Mr Hampton:** Are your figures right or wrong?

**Hon Mr Newman:** If you look at that—

**Mr Hampton:** We can do the math. I just want to know, are your figures right or wrong?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're asking a question and I would like the opportunity to at least answer it. I don't think I'm being given the opportunity. You're asking a question and then you're saying—

**Mr Hampton:** I'm asking, do you stand behind those figures?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you, if those are the figures in my speech, obviously I stand behind those figures.

**Mr Hampton:** Then the Premier was obviously wrong, I take it, when he said on May 29, "At no time was any person downsized in a way that should have affected the delivery of any services of the Ministry of the Environment"?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You also would want to look as I continue in that speech. I would encourage you to read through the rest of it.

"The Ministry of the Environment now focuses on policy, standard setting, compliance and enforcement. In 1994-95, staff dedicated to compliance comprised 40% of the workforce. Today, compliance staff make up 49% of the workforce.

"Enforcement staff comprised 4% of our workforce in 1994-95. Today, they account for 6%.

"No investigators in our field offices were reduced. There were 44 investigators in 1995, and there are 44 today."

**Mr Hampton:** But you admit that 220 people have been removed from that area which is charged with enforcement and inspection?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You have to look at the total compliance issue. I've gone through the figures, what percentage of the overall ministry workforce is there with



respect to enforcement. I've also indicated there has been no change in the number of investigators; there were 44 in 1995 and there are 44 today.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to read to you from a memorandum by the former assistant deputy minister of operations when she outlines that the operations division, which comprises enforcement and inspection, will be forced to lay off 279 people. She says: "These measures will have an obvious impact on our work plan. Over the next few months we will be working on adjusting our priorities and compliance strategies." That seems to say to me that you won't be able to do as much work. Would you agree with that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The answer would be no to your question, but I want to indicate that was the former assistant deputy minister's personal opinion there.

**Mr Hampton:** There's a question and answer part to this memo, in other words, preparing staff for answering questions should they come from the media or other staff. It says, "What will happen to the work plan now?" Suggested answer: "We will be working on adjusting our priorities and compliance strategies to harmonize with the ministry's core business functions." That sounds to me like she's concerned that you won't be able to do all the work. Wouldn't you agree?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think you want to look at some of the figures with respect to charges laid in the province and number of convictions.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, I'd like that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd be pleased to tell you that in 1995 there were 1,045 total charges laid. There were 504 convictions in that year. In 1996 there were 758 charges laid. There was a total of 366 convictions in that year. In 1997, 951 total charges laid, and the total number of convictions, 418. In 1998, 805 total charges laid, and the total number of convictions in that year was 414. In 1999, 1,216 total charges laid, and there were 611 convictions. So if you go back from 1996 on, there's a vast increase. Even the 1999 numbers for total charges laid outweigh the numbers from 1995.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm glad you brought this up because in 1998, according to your own statistics, there were 3,300 violations in terms of discharge of polluted water, yet, incredibly, only one single prosecution. Can you explain this?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry?

**Mr Hampton:** By your own figures, in 1998 there were 3,300 violations in terms of discharge of polluted water, and yet, incredibly, only one single prosecution. Can you explain that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I know I've answered that question in the House with respect to waste water discharge from municipal facilities and also industrial facilities. Those excellencies don't take into account whether it was a 300% exceedence or a 0.001% exceedence. It obviously doesn't deal with the issue of whether there were abatement programs put in place to do that. It doesn't offer any explanation as to whether there was new equipment in place that may not have been adjusted

properly. It doesn't account for the fact that you may have had an older piece of equipment not functioning properly. It also doesn't account for the fact that there could be human error involved in any of those discharge levels.

**Mr Hampton:** But you admit that there were 3,300 exceedences and only one prosecution?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We're talking about exceedences over allowable limits that were set in the certificate of approval.

**Mr Hampton:** That's right, and only one prosecution. So you agree that that figure is accurate?

**Hon Mr Newman:** In 1998, in total, there were 805 charges laid from the ministry, 414 convictions; in 1999, 1,216 total charges laid, 611 convictions, within the ministry.

**Mr Hampton:** I want you to confirm this figure: Overall fines and prosecutions have dropped by about 67%, from an average of \$2.6 million a year down to \$863,000 for the year—

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're comparing 1998 to 1999?

**Mr Hampton:** That's 1998.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Certainly. Again, you have the fines. Those are the measures that would go to court, and fines are set there.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to ask you another question. I believe you stated that if the government were still doing the direct testing of municipal drinking water, then citizens would know sooner about the results of that testing. I believe you made that statement. In light of that admission, what steps have you taken to get the Ministry of Environment back into the direct testing of municipal drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Start again there for a second. You sort of jumped. You didn't give me an opportunity to answer your question.

**Mr Hampton:** I believe you stated that if the government were still doing the direct testing of municipal drinking water, citizens would know sooner the results of testing regarding drinking water.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Where was that said?

**Mr Hampton:** I'm going by the media reports. We have a tape of your statement.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to know where that was said, but I can tell you that any issue like that would be dealt with in the inquiry. That's something that would be looked at. I think you can appreciate that the inquiry must be able to do its job.

1710

**Mr Hampton:** If you made that statement—and I have it on tape that you made it—what steps have you taken to get the Ministry of the Environment back into the direct testing of municipal drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** If you've got the tape, I'd like to hear it, so I can listen to it in the context of the questioning.

**Mr Hampton:** We'll be happy to play the tape.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's great.



**Mr Hampton:** But will you answer the question? What steps have you taken to get the ministry back into the testing of municipal drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I have the new regulation I'm coming forward with. I announced that on May 29. We're moving forward with that. That's going to be a very tough regulation that will put in place and give the force of law to many items that will protect the drinking water in our province.

**Mr Hampton:** This question was specific: What steps have you taken to get the Ministry of the Environment back into the testing of municipal drinking water? The statement I have on tape is that you said that if that were the case, people would know the results of testing sooner.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The new regulation will set out a regime of how testing ought to be done.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked your deputy for advice as to the options for your ministry to re-involve itself in the testing of drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The deputy and I talk on a regular basis.

**Mr Hampton:** What steps have you taken to halt any moves to sell OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that there is nothing before us at this time.

**Mr Hampton:** You must have seen the proposal that has been put forward by your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the former Minister of the Environment. It seems to me that OCWA would easily be included in that process. Can you tell us what steps you've taken to perhaps say that this is not a good idea?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that every day in my responsibilities as the Minister of the Environment my job is to ensure that the environment is protected in our province, whether it be the air, the water or the land. That's a responsibility I have to uphold.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm glad you mention that. Your drinking water surveillance program only studies, at most, 175 out of 627 local drinking water supply systems. I'm just reading your figures: 175 out of 627 municipal drinking water supply systems. Can you tell us why the drinking water surveillance program studies so few?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We've added additional communities to the program each and every year. In fact, we monitor 175 water supply systems, and that represents 88% of the population served by municipal water in our province.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, but it's only 175 out of 627. Why do you only monitor 175 out of 627?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We're adding more and more communities to the program each year.

**Mr Hampton:** I heard you say that earlier, and then you said you're monitoring 175. Why only 175 out of 627?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Maybe I'll call Jim MacLean, who is one of our assistant deputy ministers, to answer that question.

**Mr Hampton:** He can come up later. I have another question I want to ask you.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Howard, I want you to get your answer.

**Mr Hampton:** You were consulted—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to have the deputy—

**Mr Hampton:** The deputy can answer later.

**Hon Mr Newman:** No. You've asked a question.

**Mr Hampton:** Chair, I'm not interested in listening—

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** This time is the third party's time, Mr Minister, and if they are not satisfied—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, they've asked a question. I'm willing to provide them with the answer.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm not interested in hearing from the assistant deputy minister.

**The Chair:** Minister, you're welcome to provide the answer yourself, but it is up to the third party to indicate their use of their time. Let's please use this precious time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I was asked a question; I want to provide the answer for them. If I can call the assistant deputy minister—

**The Chair:** Minister, there's indication that you have answered the question to the third party's satisfaction. Continue.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, were you consulted as to the advisability of proceeding at this time with the proposal of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to force the privatization of all municipal water and sewer plants? Were you consulted on that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No.

**Mr Hampton:** As the minister responsible for protecting the province's drinking water supply, you were not consulted on that proposal?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That might be a question that could be answered by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr Hampton:** I just want to be sure. As the minister responsible for protecting Ontario's drinking water supply, you were not consulted on such a holus-bolus plan for the privatization of our drinking water supplies?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, it's a document I have not seen.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to be very clear on this. We're talking here about the whole municipal water supply. We're talking here about the sewage and water treatment program for municipalities across the whole province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has put forward a proposal for privatization, and you were not even consulted on it?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm not sure if he has put forward any proposal. What you're talking about would be a document from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Mr Hampton:** I asked you a question in the Legislature about water quality test results and audits of municipal water treatment plants to show that they were in working order, and you referred me to the ministry Web site. But the ministry Web site has a report from the drinking water surveillance program posted from 1996-

97. That's now three years out of date, four years out of date at the extreme. Why are you unable to provide more recent information?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You asked that question, and with respect to testing, yes, people today do go to Web sites to get information.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, but why are you unable to provide more recent information?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You've asked a question, and I'd like the opportunity to answer your question. You've come here with questions, and I want to answer the questions, but I'm not being given the opportunity. First off, with respect to Web sites, many people go to Web sites to get information today. That's how technology works. In fact, there have been 370,000 hits on our Ontario's Air Quality Web site since May 1, so people are going to it.

What I find interesting, as I answered your question in the House, is that you seemed to quote from the CEC report from 1997 and say that the results of that are fine because it's from 1997, but somehow the results from the ministry from 1997 don't cut it. I don't understand.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm simply asking you, why isn't there more recent information? I hear in the statement you made today that drinking water quality and testing drinking water quality is absolutely important. Why is the information at least three, and possibly four, years out of date? Why isn't there more recent information?

**Hon Mr Newman:** With any report, there is time involved in collecting the information from across the province. The information has to be examined and put together, compiled into a report. It's not unusual to have reports, like the CEC report that came out last month, looking at something that happened three years ago, because it does take time to compile those sorts of reports.

**Mr Hampton:** The door-to-door disinfection program being carried out in Walkerton will take at least seven weeks now to complete. That means it will be six or seven weeks until people will be able to turn on their taps. The federal government's Minister of the Environment offered to provide staff to assist with the door-to-door disinfection effort in Walkerton. I understand you refused to accept, even though that would have shortened the time for the disinfection period. Can you tell us why you refused the offer?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, that's not true. There is no shortage of staff at Walkerton. It has to be done in a very systematic manner. The community is divided into sections. Everything is monitored and recorded as they go through the entire system. It's done in sections so that they're able to block off certain parts so that they're not flushing something back into a part of the system that hasn't been cleaned yet. There's a lot of work involved in that.

In my visits to Walkerton I've talked to the mayor and indicated to him that whatever needed to be done would be done. I can tell you that ministry staff are there, the staff from the Ontario Clean Water Agency. They're

going door to door to disinfect. We're ensuring that there's water there available.

**Mr Hampton:** My question is quite specific: Were you offered expert staff from the federal Ministry of the Environment?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you offered resources from the federal Ministry of the Environment?

1720

**Hon Mr Newman:** There was an offer made with respect to the investigative area, but that's—

**Mr Hampton:** And you turned that down?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We indicated that if we needed help we would get back to them.

**Mr Hampton:** So, as it stands now, you've turned that down, you've not accepted it.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's not what I said.

**Mr Hampton:** At the present time, there are not resources and expertise from the federal government working to disinfect that water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There are epidemiologists from the federal government who have been there from day one.

**Mr Hampton:** In February 1999, the Ministry of the Environment issued a directive telling staff not to follow up on a wide range of environmental complaints. Have you been aware of that directive?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Can you elaborate a little further as to what you're saying? If you can provide me with a date and who wrote the memo and what it said specifically, then I can properly address your question.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you briefed by the deputy minister or by any of the other officials regarding a directive issued in February 1999 telling MOE staff not to follow up on a wide range of environmental complaints?

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** We can get you a copy, John.

**Mr Hampton:** We would be happy to produce a copy. I'll produce four copies.

**The Chair:** The clerk of the committee will produce copies for everyone.

**Mr O'Toole:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I think there are copies being referred to. I would like a copy of those documents. We were supplied with a copy of the minister's speech—

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** We'll get the copy.

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, this is not a point of order. I am adding a minute to the third party's time. Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I guess you don't want me to answer the question, so fire away.

**The Chair:** No, Minister. I believe a question was put. Did you wish to respond?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Oh, so I'm allowed to answer the question?

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, hopefully you will.

**Hon Mr Newman:** OK, I didn't know. Thank you. In fact, the memo you may be talking about may have dealt



with non-priority items such as air-conditioners, noise pollution, smells from restaurants.

**Mr Hampton:** Were pesticides included?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We wanted to be very strategic and to have our priorities there.

**Mr Hampton:** Were pesticides included? If you can't answer, we'll ask the question later.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Listen, if you ask a question, you've got to give me the opportunity to answer it. So I'm trying to get you your answer, but if again you don't want the answer, that's fine.

**Mr Hampton:** Were pesticides included, yes or no?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's the answer I was trying to get for you, Howard. My assistant deputy minister indicates that there was no directive in 1999 that he has seen.

**Mr Hampton:** We'll deal with that tomorrow, then.

Your House leader has indicated that the government intends to present another red tape bill. We know that when the Red Tape Commission initially handed down its report, 50% of the regulations that it intended to repeal dealt with the Ministry of the Environment. Were you consulted at all on this most recent red tape bill that your government intends to put forward?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We are in discussion with the Red Tape Commission.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you consulted on the most recent so-called red tape bill?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Are you talking about a bill that has been through the House?

**Mr Hampton:** A bill that's about to be presented.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can't comment on a bill that's not before the House.

**Mr Hampton:** The government has indicated that it intends to introduce a red tape bill. I'm asking you if you were consulted about the contents of that bill.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're talking about something that's hypothetical. There's no bill before the House at this moment dealing with red tape.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to go back to the question I asked you earlier. The directive from the Ministry of the Environment is directing staff not to follow up on a wide range of environmental complaints. In February 1997, were you briefed about the existence of an internal directive for February 1997?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The answer is no to that question.

**Mr Hampton:** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair:** You have just under two minutes, Mr Hampton.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to ask another question. Your provincial water protection fund, as we understand it, is broke, it doesn't have any more money in it, and yet we understand that you intend to cancel it. Is that still your intention, that the provincial water protection fund will come to an end this fiscal year?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's important that we actually look at the facts regarding the provincial water protection fund. You're well aware of the fact that it was a \$200-million fund that was to provide money to municipalities

for water and sewage projects over a three-year period. We treated this as a priority. That's why we accelerated the money to municipalities over a two-year period so that they could move forward with their water and sewage projects that they wanted to proceed with. There are many municipalities that have benefited from that program. It's a \$200-million program. It was to be over three years; now the money has been flowed, and it has been over two years. Many communities in the province have benefited from that.

There is the SuperBuild Corp as well that provides infrastructure dollars throughout the province.

**Mr Hampton:** Yet we are told today by the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario that from the municipal perspective some \$9 billion is needed right now for upgrades to municipal water and sewer plants. So you're ending a \$200-million program that has provided money over two years, you're ending that, when the president of AMO is telling you that from the municipal perspective you're talking about a \$9-billion problem. At the same time, this is a letter of May 26, 2000, from the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association saying to Mr David Lindsay of the Ontario SuperBuild Corp, "We were disappointed to hear that water and sewage infrastructure is not a primary target area for the infrastructure programs developed by the province."

Can you tell us, as Minister of the Environment, if you're ending your program, and municipalities are saying there's potentially a \$9-billion problem and Mr David Lindsay of the Ontario SuperBuild Corp is saying, "This is not a priority," what is your plan as Minister of the Environment to protect the quality of water?

**The Chair:** The time for the third party has expired. Minister, you may wish indeed to use some of your time—you have a time of response, which is why it is important to stay on the subjects that the various parties bring up. You now have half an hour for response, and you may include your response to Mr Hampton if you so wish.

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, with respect to what you said, we're not ending any fund. In fact, there's money available through the SuperBuild Corp for infrastructure in the province. If I haven't made myself clear on that, I'll make it clear yet once again to you that there is that money available.

There are many issues, and I want to thank the member for St Catharines for raising the points that he raised. I don't think I'll be able to get to all of them in half an hour, but I'll do my best to touch on as many of them as possible.

I know that you would want me to touch on the issue of staffing and any budgetary reductions within the ministry. I just want to again indicate that in 1995 the ministry had provided funding to municipalities and others under the three Rs and blue box strategies to build the infrastructure that today enables almost 40% of diversion of municipal solid waste. This was funded by subsidies which required 73 staff to administer. So there



were 73 Ministry of the Environment staff administering that program. I wanted to point that out to you today.

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Today, in the year 2000, the Waste Diversion Organization is in charge and is undertaking its activities with \$14 million from the LCBO and the private sector. So, that function is being carried out in a different way today, but it's still being carried out.

Subsidies for the three Rs and other programs, such as grants for energy efficiency and environmental groups, had climbed to \$134 million, not counting water and sewage grants, by 1995-96. When other capital funding programs were reduced, starting in 1993-94, water and sewer funding continued for municipalities through the ministry and OCWA programs.

In fiscal 1986-87, the ministry launched the MISA program, which provided for the development of monitoring and effluent limits regulations for eight industrial sectors discharging directly to surface waters and for the municipal sector discharging into sewers. Resources for the MISA program added up to about \$23 million and 258 staff for fiscal 1994-95, when the program was completed for the industrial sectors.

During the early 1990s, Ministry of the Environment agencies, boards and committees totalled 13, including the Ontario Waste Management Corp and the Interim Waste Authority. When savings targets were imposed, subsidies, agencies and matured programs, such as MISA, that had achieved their goals and no longer needed large administrative staffing and funding were used to meet the majority of the reductions without affecting core programs and, in particular, front-line activities.

I think everyone on the committee ought to know that between 1992 and 1995, the government of the day, the NDP, eliminated 208 positions from the Ministry of the Environment. In case we didn't all catch that, I'll repeat it: Between 1992 and 1995, the NDP, which was the government of the day, eliminated 208 positions from the Ministry of the Environment.

Other increases and decreases in the ministry's budget reflect ongoing changes. For example, the Ontario Clean Water Agency was created in 1993, resulting in a transfer out of the ministry's budget of \$435 million and 980 staff. As well, in 1993 the former Ministry of Energy was merged with the Ministry of the Environment, bringing in \$55 million and about 200 staff. Subsequently, in 1998-99, the energy core business was transferred out to the new Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology, along with \$14.4 million and 117 staff.

During the mid-1990s, various constraint programs netted selected funding increases. For example, in fiscal year 1993-94 alone, \$50.7 million was cut as part of the previous government's expenditure control plan. Just so that everyone gets those figures, I'll repeat that: For example, in fiscal year 1993-94, some \$50.7 million was cut as part of the previous government's expenditure control plan. That included more than \$2 million in salaries.

In the late 1990s, significant budgetary reductions took place. Between 1996-97 and 1997-98 these strategic business plan reductions included eliminating subsidy programs and attendant administration, which was \$153.3 million and 62 staff positions. We terminated 10 agencies, boards and committees—\$4.9 million and 44 staff. There were 229 operations staff, including the closure of three regional laboratories. That was 50 staff in total. Remember, at this time 50% of all the water testing in our province was not done in Ministry of the Environment labs. It was done outside at private labs because back in 1993 the government of the day allowed municipalities to have their water tested in private labs. Those municipalities chose to pay private labs to do the work instead of the Ministry of the Environment.

Thirty-seven district environmental officers, seven investigative support staff, 32 management positions, 44 administrative positions, 59 scientific, technical and professional staff. The operations staff reductions focused on refocusing and restructuring compliance, enforcement and technical activities by reorganizing and merging district offices and focusing on land use policy as opposed to specialized land use approvals.

There was regional restructuring, which would have been two regions coming together and utilizing ample private sector capacity to provide routine lab testing. For example, OCWA negotiated a major service contract for routine testing for about 400 plants.

**Mr Bradley:** Minister, I realize this is your time, but can I just get a clarification? If you say no, that's fine. It was on how you changed the planning approval system. You mentioned that. Is there any more detail on that? Just about a couple of sentences ago you mentioned that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes. I can provide you with that tomorrow. I have been given my opportunity and I want to respond.

**Mr Bradley:** I just want to get a little elaboration on that.

**The Chair:** Please proceed. This is your time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I would be pleased to provide that to you. I'm just trying to use the 30 minutes that I have to respond the best way that I can to your many questions that you raised.

The regional district and local offices were merged and reconfigured to achieve efficiencies and to streamline delivery. Where reductions were made, the focus was on technical support and administrative functions. Seven enforcement positions were affected, although vacancies and attrition were applied first.

The remaining reductions at head office locations included refocusing the work of the ministry's central laboratory in Toronto on more sophisticated and complex tests for toxics, resulting in a reduction of 71 technicians who did routine tests. There were policy and program development support staff, 73 staff doing that work; streamlining the environmental assessment process, 26 staff; restructuring monitoring and science, 96 staff; and restructuring internal administration, which accounted for \$22.9 million and approximately 201 staff. Much of the

streamlining could be achieved as the ministry no longer required the significant number of resources that had been dedicated to MISA policy and regulatory development.

To summarize, in 1990-91, the ministry had 3,317 funded positions, and it now has 1,501. Since fiscal year 1990-91, 980 positions have been transferred to the Ontario Clean Water Agency and 117 positions have been transferred to the newly created Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. There have been 56 positions transferred to the shared services bureau. There were 21 positions at the Niagara Escarpment Commission that were transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources, which as the member for St Catharines indicated is now part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and not the Ministry of the Environment. There were 802 positions reduced principally in managerial, administrative and technical areas, offset to some extent by a number of additions to priority programs, including, for example, the Drive Clean complement of 37 positions in 1998-99.

Contrary to any allegations of reductions in inspection and investigative functions, the reality is that compliance funding has only been reduced by 10% but makes up 49% of the ministry's workforce, compared to 40% in 1994-95, and no reductions were made to the investigative staff.

Constraints have been a constant feature of successive government policies over the 1990s. The ministry has maintained its core business and front-line presence.

Chair, how much time do I have remaining?

**The Chair:** You have approximately 20 minutes, Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** An additional 20 minutes? OK.

**Mr Bradley:** You don't have to—

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, no, I want my time, just as the others have had their time. The member for St Catharines raised many points here today. I know the member was talking about infrastructure. I think I wrote down about 31 points. I may have missed a couple, but there were many issues that you touched on.

I think it's important to note that previous governments always allocated their infrastructure programs on a one-year basis. SuperBuild is actually a long-term strategy that addresses previous government failures. That's what the SuperBuild program is there for.

Again, the provincial water protection fund was accelerated. I think we can all agree on that. That money was over a three-year period; it's now put over a two-year period to accelerate it to assist municipalities with that.

There are many issues that the member dealt with. I know he has talked about Walkerton specifically. We would be pleased to address any of his concerns in a more general nature, as I outlined in my opening comments.

He mentioned the water treatment plants. I've indicated that by the end of the year all of the facilities will be inspected. That's a commitment I'm going to ensure is honoured.

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**Mr Bradley:** Where are you going to get the staff for that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I assure the member that they're all qualified staff and I'm going to ensure that is done. I think it's something he would want to see done in the province. Has it been done? What we're doing is we have a review of the certificates of approval, which I indicated on May 29 would be taking place. We're going to review each and every certificate of approval for water facilities within the province of Ontario. We're going to ensure that there is one certificate of approval for all facilities within the province. But we're going to go beyond that: We're going to ensure that each and every certificate of approval is reviewed on a regular basis after that, once every three years, so that every certificate of approval, no matter what water facility is there in the province, will be reviewed. So we're doing the review of the certificates of approval as well as going to the facilities to inspect them, and that's something we're going to have done by the end of the year. I know that the member for St Catharines will stand up in the House and applaud when that is done.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** Order, please. Minister, please proceed.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair. I'm just trying to respond to the many issues the member for St Catharines raised.

With the drinking water surveillance program, as I mentioned, we're adding more and more facilities each and every year to that program so that we're able to monitor more municipalities and more plants across Ontario, so that we have a better idea.

The member also mentioned the Canada-Ontario agreement. We're working towards a Canada-Ontario agreement with the federal government. I think it's important that everyone realize that in 1994, when that agreement expired, it sat there for 14 months—14 months and that program wasn't done. I remember one of my first questions in the House was from the member for Broadview-Greenwood, who asked me that question. I think she asked me about that in the first week of April. She was on the ministry because it had expired about four or five days. But when she was part of the government, it was 14 months that that agreement had sat idle for. We're working very hard as a government to ensure that.

With respect to coal-fired plants, there's a moratorium in place on the sale of all five of the coal-fired plants in Ontario by Ontario Power Generation. That would include the plants at Lakeview, Nanticoke, Lambton, Atikokan and Thunder Bay. There is a moratorium on the sale of those five facilities. We want to ensure that environmental protection is in place. That's something I want to see as minister, something I take very seriously. This will only improve the quality of the air in our province.

I say to the member for St Catharines, and I think he would be the first to agree, that over 50% of the smog-causing pollutants that come into Ontario originate in the United States.



### *Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Newman:** Because there's a regional airshed. Over 50 % of smog-causing pollutants come from the United States. In some parts of Ontario over 90% of the smog-causing pollutants originate in the United States. Yes, we have a responsibility for what happens here in Ontario. That's why we've taken strong measures with respect to smog, actions like the anti-smog action plan, which is going to ensure that industry and government and other organizations work together in partnership to ensure that smog is reduced in the province.

Another way that we're going to reduce smog is through the Drive Clean program. I think it's been an excellent program. Any time I mention it in the House, the opposition members seem to scoff, but I don't know how you can possibly scoff at an almost 7% reduction in emissions that cause smog. Every time I mention that, I just wonder. You're going to have a 22% reduction once the program is fully operational across the province—five million vehicles being tested. We also have the smog patrol out there, and I'm sure the member opposite may have seen the smog patrol out on the highways as he's travelled the highways and byways of Ontario.

**Mr Bradley:** I've never seen the staff.

**Hon Mr Newman:** There's always staff out there. I believe the number is some 15 or 20 staff. It fluctuates from time to time. The smog patrol is full-time, committed to protecting—

**Mr Bradley:** Are they full-time employees?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Full-time employees committed to protecting the environment. What they do is stop grossly emitting vehicles on our highways in Ontario. If you have vehicles, whether they be from Ontario or a vehicle coming into our province, perhaps a transport truck or another vehicle, that are gross emitters, they are able to stop those vehicles and issue tickets with heavy fines in place to go after those.

**Mr Bradley:** You said there were how many?

**Hon Mr Newman:** How many staff?

**Mr Bradley:** How many vehicles or patrols?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think it would be around 15 vehicles.

**Mr Bradley:** That's for the whole province?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I would be able to answer that in a broader sense for you later. I do have my 30 minutes. I listened very attentively to what you said. I want to be able to get through this, and if there are any interruptions, Chair, I won't be able to get through the 31 points.

**The Chair:** By all means, Minister, it is your time. If the minister is engaging members, then I assume it's the minister's choice. However, we won't have heckling or interruptions, and hopefully accord the same respect on the members' part.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm speaking directly to you. That's who I'm speaking to, and if other members are partaking, it's not the way I want to proceed.

**The Chair:** This is your time, Minister, and you can absolutely use it as you see fit, and please proceed.

**Hon Mr Newman:** As I am. Thank you, Chair.

The smog patrol is out there on our highways in the province going after those grossly emitting vehicles. I think they're doing a very good job of that.

I made an announcement on trying to get the federal government to move a little faster on reducing sulphur in gasoline. I know the member for St Catharines was there at that announcement and he would have actually seen two of the smog patrollers that we brought in off the road to show the media and members of the public who were there that those vehicles are out there patrolling our highways to protect the environment on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what they're doing.

One of the points the member raised dealt with air pollution. We've taken a great deal of action on that. He asked if the ministry would be monitoring the monitors. I think that's what the member said. I encourage him to look at our Blueprint document, which clearly spells out four commitments that we made with respect to the environment. I want to assure him and all members here today and all members of the House that my goal as environment minister is to ensure that we live up to each and every one of those environmental commitments in the Blueprint document.

**Mr Bradley:** Have you hired the people yet?

**Hon Mr Newman:** One of the proposals dealt with an environmental SWAT team that would be able to go there and—

**Mr Bradley:** Have you hired them yet?

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I would like to hear the minister, and it's an imposition to be interrupted constantly.

**The Chair:** I've already ruled on that, Mr Stewart.

**Mr Stewart:** Then please rule well.

**The Chair:** You may not challenge the Chair. Minister, will you proceed. I will ask all members not to interrupt the minister. If the minister wishes to engage, it is exclusively his choice to do so. We will monitor and enforce that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Is time added to my time?

**The Chair:** We would be happy to give you another minute, Minister, to make up for Mr Stewart's interruption, absolutely.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair.

The environmental SWAT team is one of the commitments this government made in the Blueprint document. As you know, with the Common Sense Revolution, the document we put out in 1994, a year before the election, we fulfilled all the commitments in that document and we're going to fulfil all the commitments in the Blueprint document. One of them is an environmental SWAT team, and I want to assure everyone that I'll be working very hard to ensure that that environmental SWAT team is in place.

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We also made commitments with respect to legislation, to consolidate it, to make it easier for people to find legislation without giving up any of the environmental safeguards. There is also a proposal to have a



pollution hotline so that people could call if they thought there was an act of pollution taking place. They would be able to call that number. That's clearly a campaign commitment.

One of the best and proudest campaign commitments I'm pleased about is that we wanted to ensure fines were doubled in this province. For first-time polluters, the maximum fine would go from \$1 million to \$2 million, and for repeat offenders the maximum fine would go from \$2 million to \$4 million. But we didn't stop there. We went beyond the fines. Another of the proposals was to have the stiffest jail term possible for polluters. The stiffest jail term we can possibly give under provincial legislation is five years less a day. That's a campaign commitment.

You need not look any further than the Toronto Star of about a week ago. Right in there—a polluter was given 90 days' jail time. I know the members opposite shake their heads and say that somehow someone wasn't convicted. The reality is there was a conviction registered in the case where someone was discharging pollutants into Lake Ontario, into the harbour in Toronto. A 90-day jail term was given. We're starting to see jail terms given to polluters, and I think that's proper. That's why we wanted to move forward and have the maximum jail term possible under provincial law, which would be five years less a day, for those polluters. That would be the toughest in Canada. We have the highest fines in all of Canada, as well as the toughest environmental protection in Canada.

I know there are many other issues, Chair.

**The Chair:** You still have five minutes.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I want to look at some of the issues.

With respect, the member for St Catharines raised the issue of the communications staff in Topical. There is a reorganization going on within the Ministry of the Environment's communications staff. It's so that we are able to bring in some additional senior positions to the ministry. But the reality is that when you actually look at it, I believe there would be a reduction of four staff positions, so it's not an increase, as I think it was portrayed by some of the media in the past. I want to assure the member that there would be actually four fewer positions, in that the roles and functions of those people would be brought together. There are competitions underway for those positions. I wanted to address that with the member.

I want to talk about sulphur. Ministry staff are working on a draft regulation at this point that will actually see the posting of the sulphur content on pumps so that consumers will have that information. I know there's been a lot of discussion as to which refinery has the lowest sulphur content. What we want to do is ensure that consumers have that information so that when they fill up they will be able to look at the pump and know the sulphur content of the gasoline, because I don't think we ought to wait five years for the federal government to reduce the sulphur level in gasoline.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Newman:** I hear the members opposite laughing, but reducing sulphur is a very serious matter, and five years is far too long for the people of Ontario and indeed for the people of Canada.

**Ms Churley:** You guys are desperate, aren't you? Sorry, Chair.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm trying my best to answer all the questions that have been brought forward.

I should also indicate that in June 1998 the Ministry of the Environment released landfill standards, which included requirements for siting, design, operation, monitoring, protecting ground and surface water, controlling landfill gas which obviously is associated with the issue of climate change and the benefits to the climate change issue, contingency planning and financial assurance. These clearly defined standards bring additional clarity to the landfill processes in this province, which are among the toughest in the world. There are many other issues that we've done.

I also want to say to the member opposite, with respect to mandatory emissions monitoring and reporting—I know this would be an issue that he would care very much about—that as of May 1 there has been a new regulation in effect for the province's electricity sector. It requires power generators to monitor and report emissions of 28 priority substances. These contaminants are linked to smog, acid rain and other forms of air pollution.

We're also developing a regulation for the industrial, commercial and municipal sectors. It will require the monitoring and reporting of some 357 airborne contaminants, and we expect the regulation to take effect January 1, 2001. What mandatory reporting will give us for the first time is accurate information about emissions and their sources. This information will help us in a number of ways. It will provide key information for the ministry to use as we set future emissions caps in our province.

The member opposite also indicated that you can't inspect a water treatment facility in 15 minutes; I think those were his words. I absolutely agree with him. This has to be a thorough process. That's why we're going to ensure that each and every one of the facilities in this province is inspected this year.

**The Chair:** One minute, Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** We will complete roughly 30 per week in order to meet that target of the roughly 630 plants in the province by the end of the year. I think about 30 a week will put us on target for that. That's right across the province, each and every water facility in the province being inspected and the certificate of approval being looked at as well, ensuring that we have one certificate of approval for each facility, but going beyond that ensuring that the certificates of approval after that are approved once every three years. I think that's something positive for the environment. I think it's something that's needed and I look forward to moving forward on that.

Chair, I may have about a minute left, but there's a very serious issue that I want to deal with. It has to do with biomedical waste. The member for St Catharines will maybe allow me a couple of extra minutes.

**The Chair:** Minister, your time is up but there will be another opportunity.

We have business for the committee. The minister has informed us of his lack of availability tomorrow. The pleasure of the committee can be to recess to another day when the minister is available or to permit a substitute to be answerable for the estimates. What is the pleasure of the committee?

**Mr Bradley:** My pleasure would be to have the minister before the committee. I find his answers thrilling and most interesting and my preference would be to have the minister before the committee to answer the questions.

**The Chair:** Can the minister indicate his next available day?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd have to get back to the Chair. There is that motion before the House tomorrow that I have to attend to.

**The Chair:** I understand from your written remarks that you're not available tomorrow. Are you available the next sitting day, the following Tuesday?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think I've indicated the parliamentary assistant will be here tomorrow.

**The Chair:** I understand, but the convention of estimates is for the estimates committee to determine who it wishes to appear before it and we understand your lack of—

**Hon Mr Newman:** When I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I appeared, because there are matters that come up for ministers. I think the process does allow the parliamentary assistant—

**The Chair:** At the discretion of the committee, you're correct, Mr Minister.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** Mr Chair, on a point of order.

**The Chair:** For the purposes of discussion—I'll be with you in one moment.

**Mr Barrett:** I'm prepared to answer your questions and we wish to answer your first question as well with respect to—

**The Chair:** Minister, for the purposes of each caucus's quick consideration, will you be yourself available on the Tuesday, which is the next designated day, so that we can entertain that as an option for discussion?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I don't have my schedule in front of me.

**The Chair:** You're unable to relate that today. With that in mind, can I ask for suggestions?

**Ms Churley:** I would prefer to have the minister available. I don't understand the process. I could make a recommendation that the parliamentary assistant represent the minister in the House tomorrow on the vote.

**The Chair:** That is not in the purview of the committee.

**Ms Churley:** That's up to him, I understand. It's a recommendation. Certainly I would prefer, as we all would, in this very important issue—

**The Chair:** To the government side, Mr Barrett.

**Ms Churley:** I'm not finished yet, Mr Chair.

**The Chair:** We have very limited time, Ms Churley. What did you wish to add?

**Ms Churley:** I understand that, but I would prefer and recommend that we find the next available date the minister is available. I just assumed, because we're scheduled for next Tuesday anyway, that the minister would be available for that day.

**The Chair:** You've heard his response. Mr Barrett.

**Mr Barrett:** Mr Chair, you asked for a preference and it was suggested two hours ago in the minister's presentation to permit myself, as parliamentary assistant, to stand before the estimates committee on behalf of the minister. This follows precedent, as you would know, as Chair of estimates. I have sat on estimates for a year or a year and a half, and there are a number of occasions where, when the minister is not available, either the parliamentary assistant or, in many cases, the deputy minister is there to answer questions.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, Mr Barrett. That is a stated opinion. It is the discretion of the committee to either stand down or to have the person appear. We're just ascertaining that today. Does anyone wish to make a motion? We have basically a disagreement in committee about how that might proceed.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm prepared to make a motion that asks that the committee accommodate the minister's schedule so he can appear before the committee to defend his estimates. It's exceedingly important because of what has happened in the last while. There's a good deal of interest. I'm sure the minister would like the opportunity himself to be able to answer as many questions as possible.

**The Chair:** I don't wish to interrupt but we have very limited time. I'm going to put the question, if there is a seconder for the motion.

**Ms Churley:** I'll second it.

**Mr O'Toole:** Discussion?

**The Chair:** Brief discussion, yes.

**Mr O'Toole:** I respect the request, but I also respect the issue before the House tomorrow. I think it's extremely important in this case. It's not a precedent here. Parliamentary assistants have appeared after the first day of the hearings and can accumulate the questions and certainly get clarifications. I won't be supporting this. I think it's important these hearings go ahead and that we get the questions on the table, and if possible, the answers. I'm confident that the parliamentary assistant, Mr Barrett, is exactly the person I want to hear from.

**The Chair:** Any other brief discussion from either of the other parties? I would like to put the question because I think we are called to the House.

**Mr Bradley:** I would be extremely disappointed if indeed that were the case. As Minister of the Environment, I can't ever recall sending a parliamentary

assistant to do the job. I think I had to appear all the time when I was Minister of the Environment. In the circumstances we have here, where the minister himself has had a lot of attention in the House and so on, I would like to accommodate his schedule. I understand what he wishes to do tomorrow. He wishes to participate, perhaps not the whole time tomorrow but part of the time, in the debate. I'd like to accommodate his schedule so that he can appear before this committee. That's what I'm trying to do, help him out so that he can appear before the committee.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, anything further?

**Ms Churley:** Yes. That was certainly just a recommendation. I support the motion and I would be happy to accommodate the minister's schedule.

**Mr Barrett:** We feel it is beneficial for this committee to continue its deliberations rather than to break it up, which we feel would be unusual. In spite of what Mr Bradley has said, when I sat on estimates there had been a number of times—I recall when Minister Palladini was unavailable, and I think it was the deputy minister who sat in for Mr Palladini. I recall when the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Mr Saunderson, was unavailable, and in that case the parliamentary assistant stood in, in contrast to what Mr Bradley was saying.

**The Chair:** Be brief, if you would, Ms Churley, because we really need to determine this factor so that everybody can receive proper notification.

**Ms Churley:** I'll be very brief. What we're asking here is that considering the circumstances around this issue, we're requesting that the government members and the minister make every attempt to accommodate the desire, particularly from the opposition, that the minister himself be here for estimates.

**The Chair:** I think that's implicit in the motion.

**Ms Churley:** I'm not sure if it came through.

**The Chair:** I just want to say there are precedents for both, so the committee is well within its means to accept either—either to stand down for a day to accommodate the minister's schedule or to accept the parliamentary assistant. There's ample precedent for both.

I'll put the question. All those in favour of the motion, please indicate. All those opposed? I declare the motion defeated.

I want to then have a positive motion. That was the first motion. We can indicate that the minister—

**Mr O'Toole:** A motion that we proceed tomorrow as initially scheduled.

**The Chair:** As suggested by the minister.

**Mr O'Toole:** Exactly.

**The Chair:** All those in favour of that motion? Those opposed? That motion is carried.

I declare the meeting adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1805.*











## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 14 June 2000

Mercredi 14 juin 2000

*The committee met at 1552 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** We have a quorum. We're going to start the meeting.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I understand that section 59(e), which is on page 48—we are considering the same policy field being considered in the House today, meeting on the same matter of discussing the water. The section reads, "No estimates shall be considered in the committee while any matter, including a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House." I just wonder if you could rule on that, whether we could have consideration that since it's being discussed there now, we could then adjourn ourselves to the House.

**The Chair:** I will address that point of order, Mr Curling.

The standing order does state, "No estimates shall be considered in the committee while any matter, including

a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House."

A want of confidence motion is on the orders and notices paper for today, and I understand it has been called for debate simultaneously with the scheduled sitting of the committee. Although the motion refers to the provincial government and the matter for debate is that the government no longer has the confidence of this House, I find that the matter does lie in the policy field of the Ministry of the Environment. Both the text of the motion itself and the Minister of the Environment's statement yesterday that he could not attend today's session of the estimates committee because of the want of confidence motion clearly indicate that the matters are of direct concern to the Ministry of the Environment.

I therefore rule that the meeting today of the estimates committee would contravene standing order 59(e). The meeting is cancelled.

Thank you, members. We will reconvene next Tuesday after orders of the day.

*The committee adjourned at 1554.*

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Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River ND)

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 20 June 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 20 juin 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of the Environment

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Environnement

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes

Président : Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 20 June 2000

Mardi 20 juin 2000

*The committee met at 1603 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I call the meeting to order. I invite everyone to take their seats. It is, of course, in everybody's interest that we are able to address as much of the allotted time as possible, because we do have to return to make up the time we're not addressing today.

Before we resume the hearings on the Minister of the Environment, I'd like to turn to some committee business. Mr Mazzilli, I believe you have a motion.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** I do, Mr Chair. I move that Mr Peters replace Mr Conway as a member of the subcommittee on committee business for the standing committee on estimates.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion on the motion? All those in favour? Any opposed? I declare the motion carried.

We will now resume, with the official opposition. You have 20 minutes, Mr Bradley.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Thank you very much. My first question to the minister is the question I asked him in the House, which somebody will have given him the answer to by now, and that is the question of sewage sludge. You're supposed to go to page 64 now, and I think you'll find the answer to it.

Sewage sludge is a problem. I understand that at the present time the city of Toronto is not properly dealing with sewage sludge. They're not keeping it in the digester long enough, and that provides a major problem. I'd like to know why you're allowing Toronto and any other municipality an exemption from the normal requirement of retaining sewage sludge from sewage treatment plants in the digester for at least 15 days.

**Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):** I'm going to call up Eileen Smith, the manager of the waste management branch, biosolids, to give more in-depth—

**Mr Bradley:** You don't know the answer right off the top of your head?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I do know the answer. I gave that answer to you in the House today, but I was limited to one minute to answer that question.

**Mr Bradley:** That was a non-answer in the House, so—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I wish to call up Eileen Smith to respond.

**Mr Bradley:** Does this mean you personally are not going to answer any more questions; it's just going to be staff?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I'm answering questions, but I want to give you the best technical answer possible.

**The Chair:** Mr Bradley, it's your time. If you want to indicate whether you're satisfied with the minister's response to questioning, that is your prerogative. That is how we treat each of these.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, with all due respect, I tell you this, and I raised this point at the last meeting: It is fine for staff to answer questions—

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, I'm sorry, but I can't let you challenge the Chair. We're going to have a consistent handling here, which means each of the caucuses will determine, in their responses—and I will be even-handed in the time I permit you, Mr Minister, and the time that each of the—

**Hon Mr Newman:** With all due respect, Chair, I don't ask people how to ask questions. They shouldn't ask me how to answer them.

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, we will see this time used, and the time we're spending now is not going to be allocated to the party. There is nothing to be gained from challenging the Chair. We will be even-handed in permitting you to answer as fully as possible.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Point of order, Chair: With all due respect, I can show other precedents in the past where—

**The Chair:** Minister, you're being argumentative. I do not recognize the point of order—

**Hon Mr Newman:** And Chair, you're not being fair. You're not being the impartial Chair you should be.

**The Chair:** Minister, I'm sorry, but I can't recognize your point of order unless you're going to state something to do with the rules of order and how this meeting is being conducted.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, you clearly have two sets of rules, Chair.

**The Chair:** Minister, I will ask you, as I'll ask all members of the committee, to abide by the purpose of this committee, which is to look into the estimates of your ministry and to do that in a fair and expeditious manner, and that is how I will rule.

Mr Bradley, you've asked a question. Minister, please proceed with your response.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Chair, I have a point of order. If you would allow me to execute my point of order with reasonable politeness, I find your tone is questionable. That's the first order. You as Chair—and I'm not questioning the Chair, but I want to raise a point. On the very subject you're now lecturing us on, I will raise my point and you can have your vindictive little response later. July 13—

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, you're out of order.

**Mr O'Toole:** On what grounds am I out of order?

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, you're out of order. You may not characterize that language to the Chair or any other member of this committee. If you have—

**Mr O'Toole:** I have a point of order. Your tone, Mr Chair—

**The Chair:** That is not a point of order. Mr O'Toole, my tone or your tone is not a point of order. I will address each of the members of this committee courteously, but there will be firm rules for the fair and equitable use of the time we have. Mr O'Toole, we're now using time that has not been allocated to the official opposition.

**Mr O'Toole:** Point of order, if I may. On June 13, when Mr Hampton was questioning, you made a ruling that I am going to bring to your attention, which I do not believe was appropriate. For instance, on November 24, 1999, the Deputy Minister of Education was allowed to respond to a question that had been raised during the NDP's portion of time. On November 16, Deputy Minister Fenn of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs was allowed to respond to a question during estimates. That was a question that was put by the Liberals. In both instances, the deputies were allowed to respond.

My point of order to you is: In your decision last week, you did not allow the assistant deputy minister the opportunity to respond when the minister asked for assistance. I do not think that ruling was appropriate. I am asking for you to reflect on the two—

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, I have your point of order.

**Mr O'Toole:** —submissions I have made, and the documents, and I want you to reconsider that decision.

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, I will elaborate on the decision, because I can see the confusion. In essence, the minister will certainly be permitted to respond as he, in this case, sees fit. The party questioning will be able to determine if they're satisfied with an answer. So if, for example, the minister says, "That's what I can answer," within reasonable time we won't have the minister bring forward people to use a long length of time. But of course the deputy and in fact any—

*Interjection.*

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, this is the ruling, and I want to make sure it's clear. It will apply equally to all parties.

Of course, any ministry employee who is here who can elucidate the inquiry being made is permitted to speak, but we won't get into long answers in order to take away from the time. Similarly, in terms of the questions, we ask those to be to the point. Each caucus will use its time as it sees fit. If you, Mr O'Toole, wish to

permit the minister and the deputy and other members of the government to provide answers, you will have that full opportunity.

I will now proceed with the business.

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Chair—

**The Chair:** I've heard your point of order—

**Mr O'Toole:** Respectfully to the Chair, at this point I believe I'm changing to a tone of procedure. My question to you is this—

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, if I could just interrupt, I need you to cite a point of order. I'm allowing you some latitude, because I do want to make sure there is going to be a fair and equitable ruling. You're taking up time, which will then cause the Ministry of the Environment to have to come back to be heard again.

**Mr O'Toole:** I agree, and I am questioning the decision of June 13, and in the questioning—

**The Chair:** No, I'm sorry. It's a point of order that you cannot challenge the Chair.

**Mr O'Toole:** I am referring your decision to the Speaker of the House. I am not satisfied that that decision was impartial, and I want—I have the decisions here, and I want a decision referred to the Speaker of this Legislature to ensure that there is objective chairmanship of this very important committee.

**The Chair:** That's fine. You've made your point, Mr O'Toole—

**Mr O'Toole:** I take it very seriously.

**The Chair:** —and we will resume with the hearings of the Ministry of the Environment. Excuse me one moment.

We have a question that's been put, and I'll put it to the committee: Shall the Chair's ruling be appealed to the Speaker? All those in favour? All those opposed? So the ruling will be put to the Speaker and a report will be prepared by the clerk of the committee, and it will be considered during reports to committee.

We will now continue with our hearing. Mr Bradley has posed a question. Minister, I invite you to respond.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm going to now call on Eileen Smith, manager of waste management branch, biosolids, to answer.

**1610**

**Ms Eileen Smith:** The ministry has for many years had a standard of retention time for the treatment of biosolids to ensure that pathogens have been appropriately reduced before the materials are land-applied. However, during the last number of years, it has become apparent that there are other standards that are appropriate. The US EPA has adopted a number of other standards, and those standards have been investigated by our ministry, contemplated and talked about with stakeholders. Indeed we put out a draft policy paper two years ago which contemplated the use of one of those standards: as opposed to 15 days of retention time in a digester, looking at the number of fecal coliform units. Two million fecal coliform units per gram of digested biosolids dried was the standard that was put out for



discussion, and that indeed is a standard which is used in many jurisdictions beyond the US.

So when we talk about the fact that Toronto's biosolids aren't being retained for 15 days, there are other standards that are accepted by the ministry, although they haven't yet been endorsed in a policy document—that is, the guidelines—but which have been looked at and indeed have been used in the case of the Toronto Ashbridges Bay—

**Mr Bradley:** To the minister, my concern would be that in fact you have standards and it sounds—

**Hon Mr Newman:** She hasn't finished her answer.

**Mr Bradley:** No, no, I'm not going to allow you to drag that out.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** I've got as much of the answer as I want to hear.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, you don't want to have the answer, then. I don't understand, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your answer, and I'll ask the member to now address his question.

**Mr Bradley:** The question I would have of the minister is, having heard that "If you don't like one standard, we have another standard to apply," if that standard is not an official policy, Minister, how is it that you can allow the city of Toronto to violate what in fact is an official policy and simply apply another standard that you think is more convenient because it allows the city of Toronto to do what it's doing at the present time? I could understand it if you said, "We have now a new official standard as policy at the ministry, and so Toronto or any other municipality is not in violation." I'm wondering how it is that you can simply switch to another standard because it makes it more convenient for the ministry to deal with the issue.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I guess I'd say first off that I'm disappointed that Eileen Smith isn't able to complete her answer. I guess the rules—

**The Chair:** I'd like the ministry to provide any further elaboration in writing to the committee.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I think we have an opportunity to answer questions, and—

**The Chair:** Mr Newman, I appreciate that you have an opinion. I think it's been well expressed. The general conduct of the committee is that we will roughly match the length of the questions that are put. It is the official opposition's time and it is being used, in my mind, in a manner that does not provide this committee with the information it requires.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, can you indicate the standing order to me that indicates the—

**Mr Bradley:** Perhaps you could just answer my question, Mr Minister. It's that simple.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but I would ask you—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm asking you—

**The Chair:** I'm not going to assign this time to the official opposition. If you wish to waste this time, you'll still be required to—

**Hon Mr Newman:** If you call asking the rules a waste of time—I'm simply asking, can you cite me the standing order that indicates that an answer must be the same amount of time as the question? I'm asking for your help here.

**Mr Bradley:** Why don't you just answer the questions?

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, I think you appreciate that you could use up all of your allotted time answering a question. We will rule fairly and reasonably to see if the answer was given. I think Ms Smith gave the answer—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, which is the standing order—

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, I do not intend to argue with you every time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which is the standing order, Chair? Can I get the standing order, please?

**The Chair:** No, I can't quote you a standing order.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Oh, because it doesn't exist. I see.

**The Chair:** It's the discretion of the Chair of this committee and every committee.

Minister, I invite you to address the question. We're simply adding time to the end of when you will have to respond to each of the caucuses.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm not going to be intimidated by you. I'm simply telling you that—

**The Chair:** Minister, I would hope you aren't intimidated. I hope you will participate fully in these discussions.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm simply asking for the standing order, for you to provide some clarification. Show me which standing order.

**The Chair:** Approximately five minutes of time for discussion of your ministry's estimates has gone by the boards.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've asked for the standing order—

**The Chair:** The question put forward about the ruling about how a Chair can deal with these has been raised and has been referred to the Speaker. We will have a ruling from the Speaker—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which standing order, Chair? You seem to make the rules up as you go.

**Mr Mazzilli:** A point of order, Mr Chair: can we respectfully ask for a five-minute adjournment so perhaps we can discuss these issues as a—

**The Chair:** No, I'm not really willing to entertain a motion of adjournment. We are in the midst of discussion of the ministry. We are delayed for half an hour—

**Hon Mr Newman:** You can't decide if there's a recess or not.

**The Chair:** I would respectfully ask all members to be co-operative to the furthest extent possible.

**Hon Mr Newman:** If the members of any committee want to ask for a recess, then they're entitled to.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Give me a five-minute adjournment. I'm asking, with the consent of the opposition, for a five-minute adjournment of this committee.

**Hon Mr Newman:** There has to be a vote.

**The Chair:** For the consent of the opposition? Do other members of the committee wish an adjournment?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's a recess he's asking for.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** This committee will stay on track. A question has been posed. We're asking the minister for the answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, with all due respect, the member has moved a motion asking for a recess.

**The Chair:** The member has asked for the agreement of the rest of the committee. Mr Minister, please respond.

**Hon Mr Newman:** We're not getting a fair ruling from the Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr Curling.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** This time-wasting—are we going to get it back as opposition time? All we're doing is ragging the puck here, and we want to get on with the questioning.

**The Chair:** Each honourable member is entitled to have his concern about procedure. However, the time spent on procedure will be taken off of the time each caucus would be spending.

**Mr O'Toole:** Chair—

**The Chair:** Yes?

**Mr O'Toole:** Respectfully, and I want to say this, first of all you are the Chair. I respect that. There is a motion on the floor. Those persons who are speaking should be addressing—

**The Chair:** No, I'm sorry. It was a request, not a motion. If you'd like to make a motion, Mr Mazzilli, please proceed.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, I move that this committee adjourn for five minutes so we can clarify in our minds some of the rules on this committee.

**The Chair:** Is there a seconder for the motion?

**Mr O'Toole:** I second it.

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole. Those in favour? Those opposed? The motion carries. We're adjourned for five minutes.

*The committee recessed from 1617 to 1624.*

**The Chair:** We will now resume the hearings of the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment. Perhaps for purposes of continuity, Mr Bradley, I could ask you to put your question again.

**Mr Bradley:** Yes, I'll put my question again to the minister, and that is, if you have established policy standards within the ministry, how is it that you're able to vary those standards simply because it's convenient to do so, thereby allowing, for instance, Toronto or any other municipality to violate the standards which you have as official policy? How is it you can pull another policy out from somewhere else simply because it suits the ministry's ability to accommodate Toronto or any other municipality?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That wasn't the case at all. In fact, while the retention time may not have been in accordance with the ministry's guidelines, the city has been sampling and analyzing the biosolids for fecal coliform to ensure that biosolids leaving the premises for farmland have

been adequately stabilized, as well as meet the quality criteria for the land application as required by the certificate of approval.

Biosolids that do not meet these criteria were sent to incineration at the plant. The average retention time for the biosolids in the digesters for 1999 was 8.8 days because of insufficient capacity. The city has scheduled the addition of four more digesters by the end of 2000 to provide the additional capacity necessary for the 15-day retention time.

But as I indicated to you in the House today, as a province, we have the strictest standards in Canada concerning the application and treatment of biosolids. The application of sewage biosolids is environmentally safe and of value to agricultural production, as long as strong environmental standards are maintained. Biosolids contain nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, as well as a source of organic matter which enhances soil quality and crop production.

I can also tell you that each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis prior to issuing a certificate of approval to ensure that it meets the strict requirements for the protection of the environment and human health. The certificates of approval contain specific requirements controlling all aspects of the material's shipment and application to land, including separation distances from groundwater and surface water, quality of the biosolids and application rates.

I can also tell you that the Ministry of the Environment inspects sites where biosolids are being applied to land in response to known, suspected or reported health and/or environmental problems, non-compliance or operational problems. In fact, the ministry's municipal water and sewage treatment plant design guideline outlines criteria governing the treatment process and design of sewage treatment plants. The process of the plant is governed by the certificate of approval which—

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you. That's a very complete answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm still not finished.

**Mr Bradley:** I will move to the next question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to finish the question.

**Mr Bradley:** I thank you for your answer and I'll go to the next question, which is, what about the treatment—and some of the rural members might be more concerned about this. It's the treatment that your ministry gives to portable toilets, septic tanks and other untreated human waste. We had Hillsburgh, for instance, and Mount Albert, as you would know, and I think out in Durham, John, there's a situation as well, where they're allowed virtually to put this untreated waste on what they call farmland. I think some of these people are buying up land simply to dump waste on, that it's not just going on farmland, but even when it's going on farmland, there's a concern about what kind of quality control you have over that. I know Hillsburgh's had a problem, I know Mount Albert's had a problem, and there have been other problems. Could you tell me, Minister, what kinds of



controls you have on that kind of waste? Because I understand there are not many controls of anything.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Certainly. I'll have Eileen Smith answer that question for you.

**Ms Smith:** There is indeed a wide variety of controls that are placed on that kind of waste. They are applied through the certificate of approval process and there has to be an application both for the hauler to get a systems certificate and for the sites. Those are often individually permitted with a certificate of approval, but sometimes that is attached to the systems certificate. The certificate of approval will contain a wide variety of criteria, such as distances from watercourses or streams, anything leading to a stream, distances from wells, distances from habitations or especially from clusters of homes, distances, application rates and criteria of the material that is being applied, how it's applied and when it's applied.

1630

**Mr Bradley:** I should say, Minister, I met with a delegation of people today who were totally unsatisfied with what they felt were the ways in which your certificates of approval are enforced. It's one thing to have, as you would brag, the best rules and regulations in the world, or Canada, I guess you said in this case; it's another to enforce them. My problem throughout is that with the staff they have taken away from you, with the financial resources they have taken away from you, you can't do that.

But I want to move to another area. The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors wrote a letter both to Tony Clement on February 1, 2000, and to you on a subsequent date, April 4, 2000. They said as follows:

"Thank you for your response.... You have outlined the actions an owner of a water system is supposed to take, but who is ensuring that the owner is actually doing this required work? Also, you mentioned that the local medical officer of health is to be notified if the owner becomes aware that the water is unfit for human consumption. Again, if no one is ensuring that the required actions are, in fact, being done, how would the MOH know that there is a problem with a water supply system? Local health units used to get a copy of every bacteriological water sample that did not meet the provincial drinking water standards in their jurisdiction. This procedure was faded out a number of years ago, so the MOH no longer is informed, via this route, of any water quality problems....

"I am aware that the ministry has many other concerns to deal with, but are your inspectors ensuring that these small water systems are monitoring their supplies? Do the owners have to submit a report on a yearly basis and include copies of laboratory results of their water? How do you even know if you have all these water supplies on a database to begin with?

"Self-regulation may be acceptable for some dedicated suppliers of water in Ontario, but most suppliers, I contend, do not complete the work as outlined in the objectives."

This is Ron Hartnett, who is chairman, Healthy Environments, Ontario Branch, Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors.

How can you possibly provide an answer to that? He appears to be very, very concerned on behalf of that group that in fact there are no inspections going on to speak of. At least, they're inadequate and they're self-inspections. How would you respond, sir?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, there has been no change in the reporting and notification. Those have always been in place through the guidelines, the Ontario drinking water objectives. They have been in place. To make it unequivocally clear to everyone, be it a ministry employee, a medical officer of health, a public utilities commission, a municipality, a lab doing the testing, we're giving that the force of law via regulation, where the reporting procedures will be very clear. But once again, there has been no change in the actual reporting procedure.

**Mr Bradley:** This particular organization, however, expresses grave concern that there simply isn't anybody watching what's going on. The rules and regulations may be the same, but again, there isn't the staff and there aren't the resources. I don't attribute that to you. It's up to the government to decide what resources are available to a minister, but you simply don't have the staff and resources to do that. I know you're supposed to say, as minister, that you do have, because you can get in trouble with the government, but I'm contending you don't have. Do you have a further response?

**The Chair:** Minister?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I was just about to answer, Chair. Thank you for that opportunity.

First off, I again tell you there has been no change in the number of investigations within the ministry. There is a review underway in the ministry right now with Valerie Gibbons, who is going to review everything within the ministry and make recommendations so that we have the best possible Ministry of the Environment to serve the needs of the people and the environment in Ontario. There are also the inquiries that are underway. I can assure you that everything within the Ministry of the Environment is on the table, all the operations and procedures of the ministry, so that we can get to the bottom of what's happened.

**Mr Bradley:** I don't want to put words in your mouth, obviously, but it's my observation that you're as much as conceding that you have some real problems with staffing in that regard. I'm sympathetic and will try to help out in terms of persuading the government to provide more help.

As for your contention about Ms Gibbons, she's a very nice person—I have met her, I know her—but I think you have competent staff in the Ministry of the Environment. I think it's a slap in the face to the Ministry of the Environment staff to bring somebody else in when in fact all the Ministry of the Environment needs is more money and more staff to be able to do its job.



**Hon Mr Newman:** I think there's always room for improvement. You seem to think it's more money and more staff—

**Mr Bradley:** It is.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —but I think we ought to sit back and have this review underway, the inquiries. Everything within the ministry is on the table. There is always room for improvement in any ministry, no matter which stripe of government it is. I think that the Ministry of the Environment is no exception. We want to have the best ministry that we can possibly have to protect the people and the environment of our province.

**Mr Bradley:** There's another letter I'm going to refer to of August 8, 1996, and it was Brenda Elliott who was the minister then. Mrs McLeod, the member for Fort William, wrote about the cost of lab tests. I should say to my other friends on the committee that I've got tables here that show the cost is tremendously higher for private labs than it was for the Ministry of the Environment labs, and there are many small operators who are saying, "Look, we're either going to go out of business or something's going to give."

Here's what she answered, and I'm interested to see whether this ever happened or you intend to do this:

"I am aware of the financial impact this closure may have for some analytical lab users," referring to the MOE lab, "such as small trailer parks. To help reduce the cost of analytical testing, my ministry is reviewing sampling and testing requirements for these types of operations with the intention of reducing the level of sampling that is required. This will keep costs down while still providing an adequate level of safety for consumers."

Did that happen, first of all, or, if it didn't happen, is that on the table to happen?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, there's been no reduction in the standards, there's been no reduction in the sampling requirements, no reduction in the frequency of testing. With respect to the comments in the letter that you indicate, I can assure you that it's not something I believe in.

**Mr Bradley:** So you're telling me that none of that ever happened?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's what I'm telling you.

**Mr Bradley:** Never happened. I'd have to have a fine-toothed comb to go through the ministry to see precisely what happened in that regard, but certainly that minister gave an indication she was prepared to do that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** This minister has given his indication that he's not.

**Mr Bradley:** What is your comment then about many of the folks out there who are in private business and smaller operators, and in fact smaller municipalities, and the costs they have to pay now for testing compared to what they had to pay in the MOE labs? I have the differences here. I think members of the committee would be quite shocked to know what the difference is in terms of the cost of sampling. Why is it that you're forcing these people to pay so much more, when in fact the Ministry of the Environment used to provide it at a

better price and, I would contend, just a little proudly for our Ontario, in a better way, a more competent way?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Private wells are the responsibility of the owner or operator of the well system. The owner-operator is responsible for the testing of water quality and for ensuring the safety for the consumers of that well system. For water systems that feed five or more hookups or have a 50,000-litre-per-day capacity, testing procedures fall under the Ontario drinking water objectives. Many facilities have further testing and maintenance requirements as a result of their certificate of approval that's been issued. The testing requirements for these systems remain the same as it always has. For those systems that have under five hookups, these wells are considered private wells and are subject to regulation 903 of the Ontario Water Resources Act for the purpose of construction, maintenance and closure.

**Mr Bradley:** Is there any consideration being given—only because you said everything is on the table—to something I think should happen personally, and that is the re-establishment of Ministry of the Environment regional labs so that municipalities, particularly smaller municipalities—the large ones don't have as big a problem; they have their own labs—and all those folks out there who used to rely on them before—and they had a competitive price and they had top-notch scientists working in them. Is there any consideration that you are going to re-establish those labs in the province for those purposes they used to serve in the past?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There are no plans for the regional labs, but I can tell you that we have plans to ensure that every lab in the province is fully accredited. I can give you that assurance.

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**Mr Bradley:** They're not accredited, then, at this moment—

**Hon Mr Newman:** What happened is, we as a ministry strongly encouraged those municipalities, public utilities commissions and owner-operators of those facilities to have in their contract the use of an accredited lab. I would think most people would want to have an accredited lab. Some municipalities, for whatever reason, chose not to have accredited labs, but I can tell you that in this province every lab that's performing tests on drinking water and water is going to be an accredited lab.

**Mr Bradley:** But they're not today, so—

**Hon Mr Newman:** There are some.

**Mr Bradley:** Today, we cannot say that they're all accredited. One of the things the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors said in this letter—and I don't want to go through the long detail of reading it—in essence, they expressed a lot of faith in the Ministry of the Environment labs and their ability to communicate immediately. I know you're going to set up some regime to do so. Do you not think the Ministry of the Environment labs are the best way of ensuring that there is that kind of direct communication with municipalities or other people who are seeking to have their water analyzed? I have a lot of faith in those people. I know

they did an excellent job, and I'm just wondering whether we wouldn't be better to go back to that. They'd be much better to report directly to the medical officer of health, for instance, than the rigmarole you have to go through with the private labs.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I want to bring to your attention that in 1996 half of the municipalities operating water facilities in Ontario were not using Ministry of the Environment labs. That's clearly what happened. Half of them weren't using them. But I can tell you, for the very sophisticated tests, the ministry still has laboratory facilities that would be able to conduct those tests.

**Mr Bradley:** OK.

**The Chair:** One more minute.

**Mr Bradley:** The draft memo that was leaked, dated January 2000, talked about some of the many warnings that were coming out. Have you now had a chance to think about this, ask others and determine whether you or anybody in your political staff or your office saw the draft or the final memo and what opinion you expressed when you found out that your own officials were very worried that the kind of thing that actually happened in Walkerton was going to happen?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Let me tell you, that working document and any other relevant documents to what happened in Walkerton are under investigation.

**Mr Bradley:** You're not prepared to say when you saw it. When you say "investigation" I understand with others. I really do. I'm trying to be fair to you in that regard. I'm just wondering whether you ever saw it, or your staff, not whether other ministry officials saw it.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered that question.

**Mr Bradley:** You don't want to answer it. OK.

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton for the third party, you have 20 minutes.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have a few questions I'd like to ask you. Minister, last week you said you had not asked your deputy to provide you with options as to the possible reopening of the Ministry of the Environment testing labs and return of your ministry into direct testing of municipal drinking water. Now that the Premier has said your ministry can staff up if you recommend it, have you asked your deputy to brief you on the options and impact of reopening the labs and re-involving the ministry in the direct testing of municipal drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Just with respect to what you quote me as saying, I don't recall saying that, but I can tell you that Valerie Gibbons has been brought into the ministry. She's going to look at everything within the ministry operations and procedures to provide a review so that we can ensure that the Ministry of the Environment is well positioned to be the best Ministry of the Environment that it can possibly be in this province, to ensure that the environment is protected for the people of Ontario.

**Mr Hampton:** The specific question again: Have you asked your deputy to brief you on the options and impact

of reopening the labs and re-involving the ministry in the direct testing of municipal drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** As you can appreciate, the announcement of Valerie Gibbons was on Friday. She will begin her work in July. She will be reviewing everything within the ministry, and I suspect she'd be looking at that as well.

**Mr Hampton:** Your answer is that at this time you haven't asked the deputy minister on the options and impact of reopening the labs?

**Hon Mr Newman:** My answer is the answer I just gave you.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, with regard to the testing that your ministry does under the drinking water surveillance program, we understand that in 1996 you stopped testing for microbiological parameters. As you know, this would include tests for E coli. Have you asked your deputy on the advisability of resuming tests for microbiological parameters, including E coli?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm going to call Jim MacLean up.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, yes or no? Have you asked the deputy or haven't you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm just about to get follow-up here for you.

**Mr Hampton:** My question is to you. Did you ask the deputy or didn't you ask the deputy?

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, a point of order can only be a point of order, so if you raise precedent or a point of order from the standing orders, I will hear it. I will not have obstreperous interruptions. There will be an answer provided—this is the third party's time. If the third party asks a short question and is satisfied with the answer, even if it's a non-answer, it is in the discretion of the third party to continue. I will make sure that there's a fair balance.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, again—

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton, at least let there be a response, and if you're not satisfied, you can move on.

**Mr Hampton:** I simply want to place the question again. Did you speak to your deputy minister about this issue or not?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The assistant deputy minister will answer.

**Mr Jim MacLean:** My name is Jim MacLean. I am the assistant deputy minister for environmental sciences and standards in the Ministry of the Environment.

**Mr Hampton:** Assistant Deputy Minister, can you tell me, did the minister speak to the deputy minister about this or not?

**Mr MacLean:** I can tell you about the decision to cancel the sampling of E coli in 1996.

**Mr Hampton:** I didn't ask that question. With due respect to you, sir, that's not the question I asked. Can you tell me, did the minister talk to the deputy minister about this issue?

**The Chair:** Mr Lal.

**Mr Stien Lal:** The minister and I have talked about several issues relating to all aspects of the ministry's



business, including the particular area that Mr Hampton is talking about.

**Mr Hampton:** As a supplementary to the deputy minister: Has the minister asked you on the advisability of resuming testing for microbiological parameters, including E coli?

**Mr Lal:** The minister has asked me to examine all aspects relating to testing to be done by the labs and to review what we are able or not able to do within the ministry labs. That process is ongoing. In the meantime, the minister has made a standing offer to any municipality or any water treatment plant that, should they require that kind of microbiological testing and if that testing isn't available to the municipality, the ministry labs would be more than prepared to do so.

**Mr Hampton:** Thank you.

Minister, the most recent data on your ministry Web site from the drinking water surveillance program are for 1996-97. Is the reason that the most recent data are for 1996-97 because of your limited staff resources? Is that why you're unable to publish more recent data from the program?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry, the 1997 report on the drinking water surveillance program?

**Mr Hampton:** The most recent data on the Web site are from 1996-97. Is the reason that you can't provide more recent data because you don't have the staff resources to do it?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No. I know you've asked me this on several occasions and my answer remains the same: It takes time to analyze the raw data that come forward from all the facilities involved in the drinking water surveillance program. As I mentioned before, the CEC, for example, has come out with its 1997 report, which you seem to think is fine, yet when the ministry issues its report for 1997, you seem to have a problem with it. I can tell you that it does take time to get all that information together and to analyze it and to put it in the form of a report.

Also, in answer to your question, yes, people do use Web sites to get the information.

**Mr Hampton:** Then I have another question. Will you make the raw data available? We're not asking you to analyze it. Will you simply make the raw data available?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think that raw data should be in the form of a report so it's put in some sort of context and people can understand the information that's there.

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**Mr Hampton:** So at a time when 18 deaths are now under investigation with respect to Walkerton's quality of water, you refuse to release the raw data that are available for other communities.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're talking about, as I've mentioned, historical information. That's why today we're ensuring that each and every one of the 630 water facilities in our province is inspected. They will be done by the end of this year. We're going to see that every certificate of approval is reviewed for those facilities to ensure that each and every facility will now have one

single certificate of approval. We're also going to ensure that we go beyond that so that every three years certificates of approval for each and every one of the 630 facilities in the province are reviewed.

**Mr Hampton:** If you have the raw data for other water treatment plants, why wouldn't you release the data?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Because you simply are asking for a report, a report would involve some analysis and that's traditionally the way the report's been done.

**Mr Hampton:** So you don't think it's in the public interest that those raw data on the testing of water in other municipalities be released to those communities.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I didn't say that. Simply, that's why we have the inspections taking place today, to ensure that all the facilities are in compliance. Any facility that's not in compliance will be brought into compliance by a field order.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, you said in the Legislature that your drinking water surveillance program adds 10 new facilities every year to the list that you survey. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's what I said, yes.

**Mr Hampton:** As I understand it, right now you are surveying 175.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It is 174 or 175, in that range.

**Mr Hampton:** If you add 10 a year, it will take 45 years before your surveillance program is surveying all the water treatment facilities in the province. Do you think that's adequate, to wait 45 years?

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I think is adequate, and we're growing upon this, is the fact that 83% of Ontario's population that's served by municipal water is included within the drinking water surveillance program.

**Mr Hampton:** In December 1999, a study was completed called the Extent and Magnitude of Agricultural Sources of Cryptosporidium in Surface Water. It was funded in part by the Ministry of Agriculture. As you are aware, there are currently hundreds of boil-water orders in effect with regard to cryptosporidium from surface water. Minister, have you been briefed on this report, and what recommendations, if any, did you make on the basis of that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I haven't. That report, as you know, is from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked to be briefed on that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I haven't.

**Mr Hampton:** Did you know that 100 people died in Milwaukee in 1993 because of cryptosporidium in the drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes.

**Mr Hampton:** And you haven't asked to be briefed on that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** As you can imagine, we are going through many documents and there is a review underway. There are the investigations and the public inquiry.



**Mr Hampton:** Minister, many communities are facing boil-water orders because of cryptosporidium. There are five in my constituency alone. As you know, chlorination is not an effective tool to deal with this parasite in drinking water. What is required is a filtration system. Some communities like Bruce Mines, Balmer town, Cochenour, Hudson and Vermilion Bay may have to boil their water for many, many months. Can you tell us what your ministry is doing to assist these communities in getting filtration systems installed, to keep cryptosporidium out of the drinking water? Have you issued any instructions? Have you asked for any briefings?

Let me make the question simple: Have you asked for any briefings on this issue, Minister?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We'll get the answer to your question when we get Edward Piché up here.

**Mr Hampton:** First question: Have you asked for any briefings on this issue?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm going to answer your question here.

**Mr Edward Piché:** My name is Edward Piché. I am director of the environmental monitoring and reporting branch.

**Mr Hampton:** Mr Piché, has the minister asked you for any briefings on this issue?

**Mr Piché:** There have been numerous briefings of senior officials in the ministry in the past two years.

**Mr Hampton:** Has the minister asked you for any briefings on this?

**Mr Piché:** Has the Minister of the Environment specifically addressed that question to me?

**Mr Hampton:** Yes.

**Mr Piché:** At the moment, he has not.

**Mr Hampton:** Pardon me?

**Mr Piché:** He has not at this moment, no.

**Mr Hampton:** Your ministry hasn't briefed the minister on the Extent and Magnitude of Agricultural Sources of Cryptosporidium in Surface Water?

**Mr Piché:** Excuse me?

**Mr Hampton:** You haven't briefed the minister on the report called the Extent and Magnitude of Agricultural Sources of Cryptosporidium in Surface Water?

**Mr Piché:** I'm sorry?

**Mr Hampton:** There was a report done in December 1999. It was a study paid for in part by the Ministry of Agriculture. It's entitled the Extent and Magnitude of Agricultural Sources of Cryptosporidium in Surface Water. Have you briefed the minister on this report?

**Mr Piché:** Have I personally briefed the minister on the report? I have not.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you been asked to brief the minister on this report?

**Mr Piché:** There have been requests. What period are we talking about? The last day, the last week, the last month?

**Mr Hampton:** The minister was sworn in, I guess, in March.

**Mr Piché:** There were comprehensive briefing materials prepared which also covered this issue, perhaps not that specific report, but certainly the issue of cryptosporidium.

**Mr Hampton:** Thanks. We're making some headway.

Minister, have you read the Galt report on the impact of intensive farming? The Ministry of Agriculture tells me this report has been available since April 17.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's the report out of OMAFRA.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I said that is a report out of OMAFRA.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you read the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That is a report out of OMAFRA.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked for a copy of the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's OMAFRA's report.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked to be briefed on the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The report has not been released.

**Mr Hampton:** Do you plan to ask for a copy of that report?

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: This is clear cross-examination. At no time have I seen a committee function in this way.

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, that's not a point of order. The purpose of estimates is to ask questions and to receive answers.

**Mr Mazzilli:** What we're seeing here is cross-examination of the minister, without an opportunity—

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, that is not a point of order. Mr Hampton?

**Mr Hampton:** Do you plan to ask for a copy of that report? I'm asking you. I can't read your mind.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You seem to put words in people's mouths.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm asking you, do you plan to ask for a copy of that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** What do you think?

**Mr Hampton:** Well, let me try another way: When do you plan to ask for a copy of that report, which would seem to me to be germane in terms of the contamination of drinking water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The report out of OMAFRA, which is not the ministry that is here before estimates today—that report will be released, obviously. It's up to the minister to release that. I will get my copy and I'll read it, just like everybody—

**Mr Hampton:** And you haven't asked for a copy of that thus far.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The report has not been released.

**Mr Hampton:** The Minister of Agriculture has had it since April 17. He admitted that in the Legislature. And so you're telling me that, despite the fact that this report has been available since April 17, you haven't asked for a copy of it and you haven't asked to be briefed about it.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I would encourage you to ask the minister from OMAFRA.

**Mr Hampton:** Was the Premier right when he told the Legislature on May 30 that intensive farming played no role in the contamination of water in Walkerton?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's for the inquiry and the three other investigations to determine.

**Mr Hampton:** You have no opinion on that? You have no view?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Investigations are underway.

**Mr Hampton:** And you're not interested in that question, about whether or not there is some connection between intensive farm runoff and contamination of the surface water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I didn't say I wasn't interested. I simply indicated to you, had you been listening, that there are the investigations underway. They are still determining the causes of things, and I would encourage you to have an open mind.

**Mr Hampton:** As I understand it, one of the investigations is to be conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and you are the Minister of the Environment. So have you asked any questions about the connection between the runoff from intensive agricultural operations and the contamination of surface water?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You know that's an independent investigation through the investigations and enforcement branch. You would know that, or if you don't, you ought to know it.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked the deputy minister for a briefing on the possible contamination of surface water as a result of intensive industrial farm operations?

**Hon Mr Newman:** These are issues for the inquiry, and there is the review of the ministry underway.

**Mr Hampton:** So you're not interested in that question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I didn't say that. Again, you're putting words in my mouth.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked for a briefing from your deputy minister on that issue?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you tell me, Minister, did the MOE have any staff working on the Galt report?

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**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked the deputy minister for a briefing on the Galt report from those staff members?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The report has not been released.

**Mr Hampton:** So despite the fact that your ministry had staff working on the Galt report on intensive farm issues and the runoff from intensive farm operations, you haven't asked for a briefing on that.

**Mr Lal:** Mr Chair, if I could, perhaps this is the committee to get to the root of this. As the minister indicated, the lead for this particular activity is with the Ministry of Agriculture. We have been working in an interministerial committee with the Ministry of Agriculture, but it is for them to determine when the report will be ready to be released or to be shared with other ministries. To the best

of my knowledge, we haven't quite got to that stage as yet.

**Mr Hampton:** If I may ask the deputy, have you asked them to share any of the information or has the minister asked them to share any of the information?

**Mr Lal:** I have not personally asked them to share that information with me or with the minister. As I indicated, we have a secondary role in that process.

**Mr Hampton:** I appreciate that.

**Mr Lal:** Whenever we get to that—

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, have you asked the Minister of Agriculture to share any of that information with you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's up to him to release that report.

**The Chair:** One more minute.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, this is a report called Delivery Strategies by the operations division of the Ministry of the Environment. It was released internally April 9, 1998. It was revealed to the public in February 1999 that this report existed. Have you ever seen this?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes.

**Mr Hampton:** Do you approve of this document?

**Hon Mr Newman:** What that document does is look at delivery strategies and how to prioritize those strategies.

**Mr Hampton:** Do you approve of this document and the strategies outlined in it? Do you approve of the strategies outlined here? Do you understand that the strategies outlined here specifically say that the Ministry of the Environment operations division is to restrict its activities in terms of investigation and enforcement?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's not what it says. What it talks about is setting priorities, and you know that.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, it says that you'll no longer be able to do some of the work you used to do. Do you approve of that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll call on Carl Griffith, the ADM for operations. He can explain and expand upon that for you.

**Mr Hampton:** Mr Griffith, maybe you can tell us. Did the minister approve of this or not approve of it?

**The Chair:** We have time for a very brief answer.

**Mr Hampton:** Did the minister approve of this document or not approve of it, or do you know?

**The Chair:** I think, Mr Hampton, with respect, you've had that answered by the minister.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister's turned it over to—

**The Chair:** I understand, but I did hear the minister answer that question very directly. Perhaps we can defer this to the following turn.

**Hon Mr Newman:** With all due respect, Chair, I indicated and called upon the assistant deputy minister to expand upon that.

**The Chair:** That specific question?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Mr Hampton raised some points within that report. I've asked the ADM for that division to answer the question.

**Mr Hampton:** If I can ask the assistant deputy minister, is it your understanding that the minister has



approved of this report—whatever it's called—Delivery Strategies?

**The Chair:** Could you introduce yourself for the purposes of Hansard, and I'll ask for a brief reply.

**Mr Carl Griffith:** I'm Carl Griffith, assistant deputy minister for regional operations, Ministry of the Environment.

**The Chair:** Thank you. A brief reply or comment, please.

**Mr Griffith:** The reply to the question—I believe the minister's already responded to that.

**Mr Hampton:** To your knowledge, the minister has approved of this report or this strategy?

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton, with respect, that answer was given directly by the minister. We are unfortunately out of time so I'll have to defer this to the next round. We now turn to the government party.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, when you look at some of the evidence in Ontario in sheer frequency and duration, there have been fewer air quality alerts to date than in the past 13 years. In fact, we have the lowest levels since air quality index readings first started taking place in 1988, and 1993. But the warmer weather is certainly coming and that causes us some concern, with the potential for smog. I know that the Drive Clean program is being expanded to 13 urban areas, from Peterborough to Windsor, and test procedures have been enhanced. Minister, either yourself or a staff member in charge of Drive Clean from your ministry is welcome to explain the beginning of Drive Clean to where we are today, with some detail, please.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Certainly. I'm going to have to call Dave Crump up to answer a bit, and then I'll expand upon that. Why don't I lead off here, then Dave will follow up on what I'm saying.

I want to say to the member for London-Fanshawe that fighting smog is a top priority for this government and for me as minister. We are moving forward on schedule with Drive Clean. The Drive Clean program is making a difference to the quality of the air that we breathe.

In 1999, the Drive Clean program tested one million vehicles, which is just less than 20% of the Ontario fleet, and cut smog emissions by almost 7%. When fully implemented, Drive Clean will cut emissions of smog-causing pollutants from vehicles in the program area by 22%, particulate emissions by 220 tonnes and greenhouse gases by 100,000 tonnes annually. Drive Clean is identifying the dirtiest vehicles and making sure the emissions problems are fixed before they are licensed for the road.

I'm committed to continuous improvement and accountability and to providing the best emission reduction program possible. We are working to improve Drive Clean through a review of its first year of operation. Proposed changes will reflect my commitment to emissions reductions, consumer satisfaction, fairness and business integrity.

Consumer protection is a priority of the Drive Clean program. The ministry has zero tolerance for fraud or customer abuse. The ministry conducts frequent, overt and covert audits to monitor the performance of Drive Clean facilities and ensure that they are meeting their performance requirements.

Finding a Drive Clean facility is very easy. There are over 1,000 accredited Drive Clean facilities and over 4,850 certified inspectors and repair technicians in the light-duty vehicle program registered in the GTA and the Hamilton-Wentworth area. The program will be expanded to 13 other urban areas, as well as commuting zones, by 2001, one year ahead of the original schedule.

Since September 1999, an additional 650 accredited Drive Clean facilities began testing heavy-duty trucks and buses for smog-causing pollutants. The smog patrol is also in full force. I'm sure you may see them along the 401 as you commute back and forth from your riding in London. They're taking immediate action against polluting vehicles, including those from out of the province and out of the country. In 1999, the smog patrol performed close to 3,000 pre-inspections, 1,000 tests, and issued 425 tickets. We've recently increased the on-road enforcement aspects of the Drive Clean program with the addition of new smog patrol staff.

Drive Clean is one of the largest and most comprehensive programs of its type in North America. Ontario is only one of three jurisdictions—Ontario, California and New Jersey—to have mandatory periodic inspections of trucks and buses, as well as an on-road enforcement program. You should know that more than 4.7 million vehicles will be covered by the program once it is fully implemented in 2001-02. We are committed to this program and to ensuring its effective and timely delivery.

We believe the private sector is best equipped and has the expertise to deliver components of the Drive Clean program. Drive Clean is being delivered by a number of private sector service providers under contract to the government. The government's role is to ensure that implementation satisfies the commitment to emissions reductions, consumer satisfaction and fairness. Emission tests must be done at accredited Drive Clean facilities to protect consumers against fraud and to ensure properly trained personnel conduct the tests. Former Minister of the Environment, Tony Clement, committed to a Drive Clean program review in the summer of 1999. In the September 1999 throne speech, a commitment was made to improve that program while meeting smart reduction goals.

Since I've been appointed as the Minister of the Environment, I've been looking at ways to improve the Drive Clean program. I am committed to continuous improvement and accountability and to providing the best emission reduction program possible. I plan to bring forward the findings of our program review in the next few months, and any changes to the program as a result of this review will reflect my commitment to emission reductions, consumer satisfaction, fairness and business integrity.



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Drive Clean is projected to be revenue-neutral based on test-fee revenues over a seven-year period. Clean vehicles which pass the test do not have to pay PST. Vehicles which require repairs as a result of failure to meet vehicle emission standards are required to pay provincial sales tax on the cost of the repairs and on the tests when the test and the repairs are invoiced together. While there is significant PST revenue, estimated at almost \$3.8 million in 1999, generated by emissions-related repairs, the average amount paid per vehicle repaired is \$24. These are repairs that responsible car owners would make independent of Drive Clean.

Ontario's Drive Clean program is a self-funded program. The province's portion of the fee, \$10 for light-duty vehicles and \$15 for heavy-duty vehicles, ensures that there is no direct cost to the general taxpayer. The majority of the costs are for the Drive Clean services, quality assurance and quality control, including over 156,000 audits and inspections, a public call centre, public education and awareness, training the inspectors and repair technicians, a dispute resolution mechanism and referee process, an independent auditor to review the entire program, and operation and maintenance of the computer system. Other costs of the program include the smog patrol, which apprehends dirty vehicles on the highways, MTO costs of processing and sending out Drive Clean notices and providing compliance-checking services for registration renewals and ownership transfers, and the Drive Clean office and management of the program.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, can either you or one of the staff members explain the smog patrol so that my constituents have a better understanding of what the smog patrol does and what the intention is?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Certainly. It's a great program. I'd like to have Dave Crump tell you all about it.

**Mr Dave Crump:** The smog patrol is part of our investigations and enforcement branch. It's funded out of the Drive Clean revenue stream. In other words, the cost of the certificates that the province sells through Drive Clean facilities is the source of revenue to fund all the things the minister talked about, including the smog patrol.

The smog patrol does lots of important things. One of the most important things is they identify smoking vehicles on the road. They can be either cars or trucks. With trucks, they will pull them over and test them. They're tested by the same procedure that we use at heavy-duty vehicle Drive Clean facilities and measured against the same standards, and those vehicles can be ticketed. Whether they're Ontario-plated or not, they can be ticketed for not complying with the standards in the regulation. The smog patrols also deal with light-duty vehicles. In addition to gross polluters on the road that they can see, they also deal with provisions in our legislation that make it an offence to sell a vehicle that's had pollution-control equipment removed from it. So they do spot checks and blitzes of used car dealers, taxi

fleets and the like, to look for tampering with the pollution control devices on vehicles.

There are some other pieces related to the delivery of the Drive Clean program itself that they assist my office with, and that is, looking for and following up on evidence of falsified tests or fraud. Those instances are rare but they are there, and it's nice to have our police force to follow up on them and gather the information and, if necessary, lay charges where that type of thing happens. As the minister said—and this goes a bit beyond smog patrol—we have quite a strong compliance component to Drive Clean. Most of it is through an outside contractor, a company called Protect Air. The contract is worth about \$27 million over the seven-year life of this Drive Clean program. That contractor works very closely with our smog patrol staff so that there's a coordinated approach to compliance monitoring and enforcement. The enforcement that is applied through our contractor is things like suspension of facilities or termination and revocation of the facility's licence, for example, if they carry out fraudulent repairs.

There are other parts of the government—the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, which administers the Motor Vehicle Repair Act—that we liaise very closely with as well, and an organization called OMVIC, Ontario Motor Vehicles Industry Council, that regulates used car dealers and licenses them and can revoke licences. We have built quite a strong enforcement compliance monitoring piece in which our smog patrol is very much linked and very much involved. So in addition to those on-road things, they have a lot of involvement in the day-to-day maintenance of a vehicle repair program. I want to stress that Drive Clean isn't just testing. Drive Clean is about repairing vehicles that don't comply with the emission standards. There's a very strong involvement in building consumer confidence that the repair industry isn't the bunch of slime balls we all think it is and that this partnership between government—which many people out there also think is a bunch of slime balls—and the repair industry is a good partnership that will deliver a good program. That's sort of it in a nutshell on the smog patrol and some of the things they do.

**Mr Mazzilli:** How many enforcement officers are involved in the smog patrol?

**Mr Crump:** The smog patrol currently has 10 permanent staff. They're in the process of recruiting some additional staff. I believe the number is something like 15 or 16 who will be directly involved in this program.

**Mr Mazzilli:** These are the people who obviously conducted the 3,000 pre-inspections and the 1,000 tests and issued 425 tickets?

**Mr Crump:** That's correct.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Does it require some level of expertise to be an inspector of the smog patrol?

**Mr Crump:** Indeed it does. There are two kinds of expertise. One is, you have to have an understanding of the law, the Provincial Offences Act, and how you gather evidence and all those things that are important to the

courts when you're presenting a case, should it get to court. All our enforcement officers have that kind of training, so they know how to go about questioning witnesses, how to go about gathering evidence and how to write a ticket properly.

The other side of it is technical training. I talked about testing the vehicles on-road. The devices to test cars and trucks are not simple devices; they're quite complex. They're very delicate instruments that can deliver up astoundingly accurate results and very repeatable results, but they have to be operated properly, they have to be calibrated properly, very much like a radar device on the road. The police who use radar have to be trained in its use and trained to maintain the instrument properly and use it properly. It's very much the same with the smog patrol people and the instruments they use on the road for testing. So there's a lot of training involved. I couldn't do it, quite frankly.

**Mr O'Toole:** Just following up on the Drive Clean, I find it interesting. I am in a personal sense looking into this with two vehicles—

**Mr Crump:** Did your vehicle fail?

**Mr O'Toole:** No.

On a more serious note, how do you tie the actual test, that is, the vehicle identification number, to the event, date and time? Are there some data on record there? Is there any chance of any fraud? For instance, I have a standard vehicle on the dynamometer, or whatever it is, and I just put in new VINs and use the same car.

**Mr Crump:** Yes. It's a fairly complex issue for me to explain, but let me start by saying firstly that every single make and model of vehicle has specific standards that depend on the vehicle weight, the engine size, the engine horsepower. Every vehicle is measured against those particular standards. The dynamometer, the treadmill device that the vehicles are tested on, adjusts the load on the vehicle in accordance with those parameters: how heavy is it, what is the engine horsepower, what is the engine displacement. Every make and model of vehicle delivers up different results depending on a couple of things: what it is and how it's been maintained. It also delivers up a piece of information that's quite unique to each particular vehicle and that's the engine RPM during the test. We gather a lot of information about the vehicle during the test. The VIN is input, and as you've correctly said, someone could input the wrong VIN and test a different vehicle. The data profile will tell us that wasn't a 1993 Nissan Maxima, it was a 1992 Chevy Cavalier, because the picture is quite different for those two vehicles. Even though the emission standards might be quite similar, the picture that we see from those two vehicles is quite different, the relationship between carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons and NO<sub>x</sub> for the contaminants that are measured.

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**Mr O'Toole:** At the risk of the Chair accusing me of interrupting, which maybe should have happened earlier today—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** I wouldn't do a thing like that.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you, Chair.

This is what I'm trying to establish: Is there an internal data management system? When I key in a VIN, that VIN tells me specifically what year, engine, cylinder—it tells me everything on that vehicle.

**Mr Crump:** That's right.

**Mr O'Toole:** Is there a corresponding data relationship between the test to tell the operator, or anyone looking at the data track, that there has been a falsification of testing records? I have a constituent who has accused me of that happening. This opportunity is a wonderful opportunity to save me writing a letter, because I will send him Hansard, if you know what I mean.

**Mr Crump:** What I should have said initially is that every test that's done at every Drive Clean facility is uploaded to a central database instantly. We have a very large contract with an outside contractor to run probably the most modern database management system I've ever seen. Data are collected remotely, they're uploaded instantly and I have access to that data. At any given time I can tell what vehicle is being tested at what facility, what the VIN is, what the make and model is, who is testing it, at what time and what the results are for that vehicle.

That ability allows us, through our contractor, to look at any data coming in. There is a whole series of triggers. You never know who you can trust, so I'm not going to say too much about how we do our compliance monitoring with the system, but we look at a whole series of triggers. The database constantly looks at all the data that's being collected, compares it against the norm and kicks out anything that looks like an exception, anything that looks like it needs to be followed up.

If the profile for a particular vehicle looks wrong, that vehicle is kicked out. That facility gets a call or a visit from our auditor, and that can be a covert audit: They show up in a vehicle that's been set to pass or set to fail; it's got a known defect. You've read about these kinds of audits in the paper before. We have an auditor. We pay them to do this, to show up and just pretend they're Joe Public or Mary Public: "I've got to get my car tested." We'll see if that facility does something, if that indication of something wrong can be caught by the auditor. We've caught lots of them—by "lots" I mean 15 or so.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got about a minute for question and response.

**Mr O'Toole:** What's the fine? If I may pursue this to its conclusion, could we remove their licence? My understanding is that it's \$50,000 to \$100,000 and more to get the facility and the dynamometer, blah, blah. Can we just remove their licence or is it that strong, that it needs punitive action?

**Mr Crump:** We've terminated two facilities; we've taken away their licence to operate. That's for doing what we call "clean piping." That's testing a vehicle other than the one they say they're testing. We caught them and



they admitted to it and we've taken away their licence to operate. There are a number of others we've suspended for periods up to 60 days, and that's costly too, because there's no revenue.

**Mr O'Toole:** So strong enforcement, strong inspection, a plan that helps the environment and people's breathing problems: I'm going to use this in the House. Next week we're not sitting, unfortunately. Thank you very much for that response. It was very thorough.

**The Vice-Chair:** The official opposition has 20 minutes.

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** I would like to ask a question that is directly in connection with protection of public safety. Minister, my question deals with the largest toxic hazardous waste dump in Canada that is provincially run, to my understanding—at least, it's under your ministry. I have asked this of you in the House concerning a full-time inspector. I would just like to know why it is that site does not have a full-time inspector when Taro landfill has a full-time inspector, and I also understand Keele Valley has two full-time inspectors. I would like to know why we cannot have a full-time inspector on that site.

**Hon Mr Newman:** There are formal inspections by ministry staff, as I've indicated to you. We also inspect the site on a regular basis to respond to complaints or to evaluate any changes in the operation at the facility that you speak about.

Recent comments in regard to the adequacy of the ministry monitoring the site overlook the fact that the company itself already employs inspection personnel. There are consultants and geoscience professionals who monitor the site operations and report their findings to the ministry.

**Ms Di Cocco:** I understand it's self-monitored. I already understand that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But the ministry itself also does formal inspections, and you can't lose sight of that fact.

**Ms Di Cocco:** Why is it that the Taro landfill can have a full-time inspector and we can't?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There is a review of the ministry underway. We're going to look at all things within the ministry and I'm sure this is something we can look at.

**Ms Di Cocco:** I certainly wouldn't want to feel that we were discriminated against down in the farther south of the province. It is a toxic hazardous waste site.

The other issue I've asked about is that we are in the process of repairs because that site had a leak. There's an integrity problem with the site. There was a leak in cell 3. You closed down cell 3 but there was still dumping within 15 metres of that cell and it's still going on. It's almost business as usual.

So they are repairing and they were supposed to have the repairs done by about February. This is now June. I understand that even the proposal for repairs has been questioned by the ministry. I'll ask again, why is it that we cannot have a geotechnical engineer from the ministry overseeing the repairs on that site, considering the potential impact that crack could have on that site?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that ministry staff have completed their technical review of the report submitted by Safety-Kleen on the proposed remedial measures and the study of tension cracks. Ministry comments were provided to Safety-Kleen on May 9 of this year. The ministry review identified a number of concerns related to the proposal. Concerns focused on the effects of the shearing stresses on the integrity of the natural barrier, the ability of a clay liner to adequately replace 20 metres of low permeable native clay fill, the potential movement of landfill contaminants downward, whether or not the water and gas venting were accurately assessed and the company's ability to depressurize the groundwater aquifer to facilitate liner replacement.

I can tell you that ministry staff will be meeting with Safety-Kleen, tentatively scheduled for the week of June 19, to discuss the company's response to the identified concerns with the plant for remediation.

**Ms Di Cocco:** I understand there has been a review of the reports that Safety-Kleen did. There is another problem with trust here. Again, I'm asking why it is that the technical expertise from the ministry cannot be on site to oversee what is going to be repaired on that site.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, ministry staff are going to meet with the company in question. We want to ensure that the environment is indeed protected.

**Ms Di Cocco:** We now have just one more quick question. As you know, there are a lot of financial problems that this company is encountering, the same as in the United States. I believe the state has asked for US\$60 million in bonds from Safety-Kleen, whereas here in Ontario you've got \$2.25 million from them. I would like to know what protection the citizens of that area have when it comes to the potential for this company, because it's having all of these financial troubles. What is your ministry doing to give the same kind of financial security that a smaller site has in the United States?

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**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, in the United States Safety-Kleen is a much larger operation. They may have many sites in a particular state. You did mention that we have bonds with a value of \$2.25 million posted as financial assurance. That was part of the 1997 approval requirements for Safety-Kleen. The current bonds are guaranteed to November 24, 2000, and will renew automatically. The amount of financial assurance required is based upon the associated risk and the nature of the work required to close and monitor the site if circumstances warrant. If there's any change in the status of the bond, the ministry will be notified immediately. I should also indicate to you that Safety-Kleen is required by the Ministry of the Environment to carry \$10 million in environmental liability insurance. Safety-Kleen does carry \$20 million, so that's \$10 million more than the ministry requires.

**Ms Di Cocco:** So am I hearing that you are looking after the store when it comes to the largest toxic hazardous waste dump in Canada? When it comes to a full-time inspector, will you put one on there?



**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question. You asked the question about the \$2.25 million in financial assurance. I've told you that is in place. I also told you that Safety-Kleen has \$20 million in environmental liability insurance, which is \$10 million more than they are required to.

I can also tell you that with respect to hazardous waste, we are tough on hazardous waste management. We've announced and implemented a six-point plan. It's an action plan to address hazardous waste, which means waste at any facility in Ontario will be handled in a safe and responsible way.

**Ms Di Cocco:** The manager of that same type of facility in Detroit said that if they were dumping hazardous waste the way we dump it in Ontario, they would be in jail, because our standards are not up to the landfill standards of hazardous waste in the United States.

Minister, are you going to actually do something and raise the standards, and legislate and enforce it for landfill?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I don't know when that person made those comments, but we do have a six-point plan actually in place. As I've indicated to you, it's a six-point plan that addresses the needs of the people of Ontario. I can tell you that there are regulations in place that were outdated, that were some 15 years old, that didn't adequately address the needs of the people of Ontario with respect to hazardous waste.

I can tell you that the plan gives immediate legal force to the generator registration manual. This is a policy manual which outlines exactly how different types of hazardous waste are described. It also revised a hazardous waste regulation that ensured that even if a hazardous material is mixed with another substance, it would be considered the same type of hazardous waste. This fixes a regulation which has been in effect since 1985, some 15 years ago. We've been able to change that and I think that's been positively received and is viewed as being something very positive for the environment here in Ontario.

The plan also revises the hazardous waste manifest and regulation. It is now the toughest in history and has been revised with a view to making it comparable and compatible with US rules and guidelines. We're also amending the certificate of approval for the Philip enterprises Imperial Street facility in Hamilton. This tightens the regulations surrounding the facility and imposes more restrictions on waste stabilization and disposal.

We have revised other certificates of approval at similar facilities across Ontario. With respect to Taro, we've established an independent expert panel to examine whether or not there will be any long-term effects from hazardous waste deposited at the Taro landfill site. We've also consulted with the Stoney Creek community through a community liaison committee for coming up with the composition and terms of reference for the panel.

**The Chair:** OK, are you satisfied with that answer?

**Ms Di Cocco:** No, I'm not.

**Mr Bradley:** She's not satisfied, but she's going to be.

I have a question, if I may continue, and if you'll alert me to the last couple of minutes so I can tell my friend from St Thomas when he comes in.

I asked you a question in the House maybe once or twice—you never did give me an answer—about the status of the Ontario Clean Water Agency: Was it on the auction block? When I asked you, you didn't give me an answer in the House, which may be understandable. If you didn't know the answer you couldn't give me an answer—I understand that—or if you weren't aware of the status at the time.

However, when you came out into the scrum you said, "No, it's not for sale." Then, the next day, at the extravaganza at the SkyDome they asked the Premier, "Is it for sale?" The Premier said, "If the price is right, it's for sale." Could you tell us whether OCWA is indeed on the privatization block, or is it right off the privatization block? I saw it on the Web site and it said "For sale" or words to that effect. What is the status?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Let me tell you that there's no review underway at this time.

**Mr Bradley:** So you've taken it off the auction block.

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I've indicated is that there's no review underway at this time.

**Mr Bradley:** That's an evasive answer, but I'll take it for now and see what I can make of it.

I'm concerned about the Red Tape Commission. It got re-established the day Walkerton broke as a story. The former—I guess he's recycled as one of the chairs now. Frank Sheehan sent a letter to the Ministry of the Environment urging it to drop a prosecution of a company that violated a provincial landfill regulation. He wrote in 1998 to then Environment Minister Norm Sterling demanding that the government not prosecute a St Thomas waste disposal operator charged with violating a regulation forbidding it from dumping waste into its landfill from outside its service area. The regulation gives the ministry control over the rate at which landfill capacity is used up and limits the ability of some municipalities to use others as hosts for their garbage disposal problems. Mr Sheehan's commission recommended the requirement be scrapped as unnecessary, but the rule was in force at the time he wrote the letter. "The ministry is continuing to pursue enforcement of this matter with vigour that might be better applied elsewhere," he suggested. "We have difficulty imagining what environmental horror is being averted by prosecuting a company for a technical violation of an unnecessary requirement," Mr Sheehan wrote. The letter was dated March 2, the same day the company, Green Lane Environmental, was in court pleading guilty to the charge.

My question is this: Are you not concerned with the number of times that the Red Tape Commission—I think you need a green tape commission—is trying to weaken regulations of the Ministry of the Environment, and was

your ministry not offended by a member of the Legislature, the chair of the Red Tape Commission, writing to your people telling you not to prosecute somebody who was at the time violating the laws of the province of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, I haven't seen any such letter. If you want to share it with me I'd be prepared to give you a more fulsome response. Again, it's a letter that you indicate was written by a former member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Sheehan. If you want to provide that, I'd be prepared to give you an expanded answer.

**Mr Bradley:** I'll let you look it up in your files. It is March 2, 1998. So you may look it up and provide an answer perhaps at a future time.

But to go back to two things: One, what is your opinion of members of the Legislature, particularly members of the government, writing to the Ministry of the Environment telling them not to prosecute? Let's say that in a generic and general way; let's not put any names to it. What would be your opinion of someone from the Legislature writing to tell you not to prosecute somebody who was in violation of a law of the province when that case was in fact before the court? What's your opinion of that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Any time anyone writes a letter when there's an investigation underway or a court case or something that's a quasi-judicial body, it would be inappropriate, in my opinion.

**Mr Bradley:** That will be on record. Perhaps we can send the Hansard to Mr Sheehan and tell him you consider it to be inappropriate. Frankly, I'm happy with the answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You asked in a general way.

**Mr Bradley:** Frankly, I'm happy with that particular answer. I agree with you: It's inappropriate.

Let's get back to the government, and it's not just one individual I'm talking about. Mr Sheehan and Mr Wood co-chair the—what would you call it?—reincarnation of this commission. How much input do you have into this Red Tape Commission, which seems to be intent upon weakening environmental regulations in this province, no doubt much to your chagrin?

**Hon Mr Newman:** My job as Minister of the Environment is to ensure that the environment is protected for the people of Ontario. That means the air, the water, the land. That's what I do.

**Mr Bradley:** That's a very general answer. I guess I'm asking for something more specific. If you can accommodate me by being more specific, what input do you have into this Red Tape Commission? Do you go before the Red Tape Commission? Do their workings come to your attention? Do you have your ministry officials help you to respond to what the Red Tape Commission might be up to behind your back? This sounds like a cell working somewhere in the government trying to undermine you, and I certainly want to be on your side in fighting this kind of cell in the government

that's trying to undermine the Ministry of the Environment.

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**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that the ministry has been working closely with the Red Tape Commission in implementing the 1997 and 1999 red tape recommendations and in developing policy, regulations and legislation that are consistent with the principles of the Red Tape Commission, namely, that the enforcement and compliance would be consistent with the objectives of the policy and risks of non-compliance. The ministry continues to review regulations to make sure they're better, stronger and clearer.

**Mr Bradley:** I worry that the Red Tape Commission is not there to toughen anything. I'm going to recommend that you ask the Premier to set up a green tape commission to see how you can strengthen the regulations and retain many of the regulations that some of the more Neanderthal-thinking say don't belong.

I'm going to allow my colleague Mr Peters to pursue an issue.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** Minister, when you look at the environmental protection compliance operating budget and you look at the increase in salaries and wages, and taking out negotiated bargaining unit salary awards—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry, which page?

**Mr Peters:** Page 55—it works out to an increase of \$47,000 in salaries and wages. Where are you going to find the money to undertake 630 audits of water plants with a \$47,000 increase in salary operating budget? Where's that money going to come from?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can assure you that each facility in the province, each of the 630 facilities, will be inspected. They will be inspected by the end of this year. The certificates of approval for each of those 630 facilities will be reviewed as well. There will be one certificate of approval per facility in the province. Certificates of approval will be reviewed every three years after that. But I can assure you that each and every one of those facilities will be inspected.

**Mr Peters:** I didn't really get the answer. I was wanting to know where you're going to find the money. Dealing specifically with those 630 sites, I take it that the Elgin area water system is one of those 630 sites. The Elgin area water system feeds into the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital, which right now is on a boil-water order because of an E coli breakout. Is the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital system one of those 630 that will be audited?

**Hon Mr Newman:** In St Thomas it would be the municipal system.

**Mr Peters:** No, the psychiatric hospital system, which is the end product of the Elgin area water system.

**Hon Mr Newman:** We will look at the distribution system within that municipal facility. Carl Griffith can probably expand upon that.

**Mr Griffith:** If it is a separate water distribution system, particularly because there has been a problem



with it, we will be looking at that. My understanding is that it is part of a larger water distribution system.

**Mr Peters:** It goes into two holding tanks and then is redistributed to the psychiatric hospital. But I'll leave it at that.

I just want to make one final comment and come back to a comment that was made earlier regarding the intensive farming report. Minister, I really think this is the crux of the problem in this province: There's no one ministry responsible for water. You've got your ministry doing something; you've got OMAFRA doing something, which you have some representatives on but it's doing its own intensive farming report which is related to water; you've got the Ministry of Natural Resources doing something with water; you've got the Ministry of Health involved through the health units in the testing of water. In my mind what I find very frustrating is that there's no coordinated plan.

You say you have an inter-ministerial committee dealing with intensive farming. I'd like to know who sits on this inter-ministerial committee and what is the end result planned to be. Is it a solid, single strategy for water, or are we going to continue to go around in circles, one ministry saying, as you said earlier, "That's Ag and Food," and Ag and Food is going to say, "That's MOE," and MOE is going to say, "That's MNR"? When are we going to see one strategy in this province dealing with water, whether that be groundwater or water plants, water in general? When?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There are different aspects with respect to water. The quality issue is something that falls under the purview of the Ministry of the Environment. The quantity issue falls under the Ministry of Natural Resources. But there are several ministries that look after aspects of water in the province, and I'm sure Carl Griffith can expand upon it a little more for you.

**Mr Peters:** That's good, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Bradley:** He can decide whether he wants to answer it any further. He doesn't.

**The Chair:** Your time is up. The third party has nominated three or four minutes to be used by the official opposition until Mr Hampton returns.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you. That's very kind of them to do that. I'll share some with you as well.

When your government came into power, your ministry officials at the regional offices and perhaps other places were told to be business-friendly. What does "business-friendly" mean?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You want to have clearer, stronger regulations, less ambiguity than there's been in the past.

**Mr Bradley:** They perhaps would interpret it as being that you shouldn't get in the face of business in this province unnecessarily. That's certainly the way your officials, some of whom have now left the ministry because they've been asked to leave, because you're downsizing—others who may still be there have characterized it as meaning, "We should go easier on the companies and not be bothering business"; in other words, the promise to get MOE out of your face. So how

should they interpret that imploring to be business-friendly?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, those are your words, sir; they're not my words. I can tell you that it's not my plan. As a ministry, we have to set priorities and ensure that those people who are polluting, that there are investigations underway to get to the bottom of it and appropriate action taken.

**Mr Bradley:** Sheila Willis wrote an internal memo in 1996. It's a confidential strategy memo written in December 1996 by Sheila Willis, an assistant deputy minister, to Jack Johnson, the top legal official in the ministry; I don't know if that's true or not. It was based on worries that staff layoffs have compromised the ministry's ability to fully enforce the regulations for which it's responsible, according to another document. It talks about defences being cooked up for such things as 75% of the functions, including initiatives to ensure air quality, surface and groundwater quality, proper waste management, quality of drinking water and safe use of pesticides. Why would the ministry be busy developing these defences against negligence if indeed you were satisfied that there were not going to be any significant problems with your cutting and downsizing, as the Premier said there was none?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I think it's the issue of risk assessment. Those are comments made by a former assistant deputy minister, but those are the sorts of things that are going to be looked at within the inquiry.

**Mr Bradley:** Well, they may be looked at within the inquiry, and I hope they are. However, I'm interested in your opinion of a ministry which has massive cuts coming to its budget and its staff and then turns around and says, "We'd better scramble to have some kind of defence because we're making ourselves very vulnerable." Do you not think that in fact your government—not you, your government—was making the Ministry of the Environment very vulnerable by the massive decrease in staff and budget?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Every good organization does a risk assessment.

**Mr Bradley:** And so you did a risk assessment in this particular case and developed a defence against it. Let me go on to another issue then.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's not what I said. I said every good organization does a risk assessment. And then I think you had said that's a good defence or something. That's not what I said. What I clearly stated was that every good organization does a risk assessment.

**Mr Bradley:** That was my interpretation, which is fine. I always accept what the minister says as his own words.

What is the administrative monetary penalties program, which was begun in 1999? Is that not a program which was there to weaken enforcement? My friend Frank will be interested in this; he was a police officer. Was this not a program intended to weaken enforcement in the province and provide for smaller penalties?



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**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll have Doug Barnes expand upon that for you.

**Mr Doug Barnes:** Under Bill 82, authority was given for the ministry to develop regulations to establish administrative monetary penalties. The penalty range has yet to be established. It would apply to the three main pieces of ministry legislation: the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Pesticides Act and the water act. The number of penalties that are potentially available is quite large. We have undertaken a preliminary discussion with different stakeholders in terms of how it will be applied, and our intention would be to post a draft of that regulation on the environmental registry in the near future.

**Mr Hampton:** Mr Newman, Toby Barrett is your parliamentary assistant, is he not?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes, he is; you're aware of that.

**Mr Hampton:** And Mr Barrett and Mr Galt together held all of the hearings which go into the Galt report? They heard from 700 farmers, or 700 people, as I understand it, during the hearings?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Toby Barrett is also a member of the Legislative Assembly. He and Dr Galt went out and did some research on this issue.

**Mr Hampton:** So despite the fact that your own parliamentary assistant participated in the Galt report, and that officials from your ministry participated in the Galt report, and despite the fact that the report deals with the issue of nutrient management, specifically the enforcement of nutrient management from farms, you haven't asked for a briefing on the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, again, the role of the ministry was a secondary role. The lead ministry, as I will say again for you in case you didn't catch it the first two or three times, was the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Mr Hampton:** You haven't asked your parliamentary assistant for a briefing on the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that the report has not been issued. I think you are aware of that. Any role that he would have played would have been a secondary role.

**Mr Hampton:** You haven't asked your parliamentary assistant for a briefing on the report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, the report has not been issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Mr Hampton:** Are you aware of a Health Canada study that showed that 40% of the E coli cases in Canada were recorded right here in the province of Ontario? Did you know that the study linked higher incidences of E coli in water resources with intensive numbers of livestock in the area? Were you aware of that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've read it in the media, but I've not read the report itself. You should also keep in mind there are several different causes for E coli. You would know that some if it is through water, you may or may not know that some of it can be through beef or

hamburger that is not cooked properly, that E coli can also be that. So I'm not sure which numbers you're using.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked your deputy minister for a briefing on that report by Health Canada?

**Hon Mr Newman:** We've asked for many briefings on various issues with respect to E coli.

**Mr Hampton:** Are you aware of a report called Groundwater in Ontario? This report warns that many aquifers are poorly protected from near-surface contamination sources. It cites that 31% of Ontario wells are contaminated with bacteria. The report was published by a number of organizations including Environment Canada. Have you asked for a briefing on that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's the type of issue the inquiry will look at.

**Mr Hampton:** But as the minister responsible for ensuring the safeguarding of our drinking water, have you asked for a briefing on that report?

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: The leader of the third party is referring to specific reports. I think it's only proper that those reports be given to all members of the committee so that certainly we know, in fact—

**The Chair:** Your request is noted. The clerk, Mr Hampton, would be happy to copy any materials that you have to share.

**Mr Hampton:** I can provide you those.

**The Chair:** Please continue.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you asked for a briefing on that report?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which report?

**Mr Hampton:** Don't worry.

Is your ministry aware of a 1997 study cited by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority that shows that liquid manure applied in accepted quantity and under ideal conditions is leaching through cropland into field tile and finding its way directly into streams and rivers within a half-hour timeframe?

**Hon Mr Newman:** This would be a report that would be dealt with through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which isn't the ministry before the estimates committee today.

**Mr Hampton:** These are all reports dealing with the contamination of groundwater by agricultural runoff. Your parliamentary assistant just participated in a round of hearings where 700 people appeared and a report has been prepared on groundwater runoff from intensive agricultural operations. That report was prepared on April 17. You haven't asked for a copy of that report. You haven't asked for a briefing on it from your deputy minister; from your officials, who sat on the report; or from your parliamentary assistant who was one of the principals of the report. Is that right?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No. What I've indicated—and I'll say it again—is that the report has not been released. It's not a report that is from the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment is the ministry here today before the estimates committee. The Ministry of

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is the ministry leading that. They would be the ones releasing that report. I don't know how many times I've had to repeat myself.

**Mr Hampton:** In light of Safety-Kleen having filed for bankruptcy, have you instructed your officials to deny the company's request for MOE's permission to increase the volume of hazardous toxic waste that they import from the United States to Flamborough?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Carl Griffith is here.

**Mr Hampton:** Maybe you can tell me. Has the minister instructed you to deny the company's request?

**Mr Griffith:** We are currently looking at their service area to make sure that the waste that is going into that site is in compliance with the service area.

**Mr Hampton:** Has the minister instructed you to deny the company's request?

**Mr Lal:** Mr Chair, if I could respond to that question, it is not in the nature of things for the minister to instruct an official on the merits of an application of this sort. This sort of decision would be made by officials, such as the director of the EA branch, who would be dealing with applications of this sort. In the normal course of events, it would not be something which would have a ministerial fiat on it.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll ask the minister again: Have you been briefed about this request?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No.

**Mr Hampton:** You haven't been briefed about this request by Safety-Kleen to increase the volume of hazardous toxic waste that they import from the United States to Flamborough, despite the fact they have filed for bankruptcy.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I have not been briefed on that issue. It's obviously something that's still within the ministry, through the application process. Many people come forward, many companies come forward with ideas. Not all are accepted; some are accepted, some are rejected.

**Mr Hampton:** So you have been briefed.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I didn't say that. Again, you're putting words in my mouth. I did not say that.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you been briefed?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Mr Hampton:** I've asked you a whole bunch of questions about your ministry. Earlier I asked you if you have made any recommendations about increasing staff for your ministry. Let me ask you: Have you made any recommendations or do you have any recommendations for increasing staff related to the drinking water surveillance program?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can again assure you, as the Premier has, that whatever it takes, we are prepared to do. There is the review underway of the ministry to ensure that all policies and procedures and operations of the ministry are going to protect the people of this province in the 21st century.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you made any recommendations regarding more staff in your ministry to do follow-up

work with respect to groundwater contamination from intensive livestock operations?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There is a review underway, as I've indicated. We're going to look at all aspects and make recommendations from there.

**Mr Hampton:** You indicated earlier that Safety-Kleen has their own inspector for their dump here. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I said there is on-site inspection, yes.

**Mr Hampton:** In view of the fact that they have filed for bankruptcy, have you made any recommendations regarding inspection staff to do that inspection work?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Regional staff attend to that site on a regular basis. With respect to bankruptcy, which you're talking about, I understand that affects their American operations, not their Canadian operations. I don't know if you were out of the room at the time, but I indicated that there is the \$2.25-million financial assurance that's put in place by a bond guaranteed to November 24, 2000. It automatically renews at that point.

**Mr Hampton:** Do you consider that adequate?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to finish my answer.

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton, let him finish his answer, please. Go ahead, Mr Newman.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm allowed to finish. Thank you.

The amount of financial assurance is based upon the associated risk and the nature of the work required to close and monitor the site if the circumstances warrant. If there's any change to the status of the bond, the ministry will be notified immediately. I also indicated that Safety-Kleen is required by the ministry to carry \$10 million in environmental liability insurance. Safety-Kleen carries \$20 million, which is \$10 million more than is required by the ministry.

**Mr Hampton:** You're aware that in the United States one state alone is asking for a \$70-million deposit from the company.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It depends upon the size of the operation in that state. You're comparing apples and oranges.

**Mr Hampton:** So the fact that with a state in the United States demanding a \$70-million deposit, it doesn't bother you that you're only asking for a \$2.5-million deposit.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's not what I said. Perhaps you weren't listening to what I said, but I indicated to you that the amount of the bond depends on the size of the operation.

**Mr Hampton:** You believe the \$2.5 million is adequate for the operation here in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Actually, you didn't listen to what I said. What I indicated was, there were bonds totalling \$2.25 million as financial assurance. That's what I indicated.

**Mr Hampton:** You think that's adequate?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that there is the environmental liability insurance that Safety-Kleen has

as well. They're required by the ministry to carry \$10 million; they carry \$20 million.

**Mr Hampton:** You think that's adequate?

**Hon Mr Newman:** If you are suggesting that it's inadequate, please provide some information to me. That's what is in place for that site.

**Mr Hampton:** I take it from your answer you believe that's adequate.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've indicated to you what the value of the bond is and what the environmental liability insurance is for that site.

**Mr Hampton:** Are you aware that your government has sent a list, established by cabinet, to the Ontario Realty—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Mr Chair, does this go to—

**The Chair:** It's been drawn to my attention we're now past 6 of the clock. This committee meets for the afternoon, which roughly ends at 6 o'clock. Mr Hampton, I have to declare the meeting adjourned. We'll consider the last three minutes of your questioning when we're reconvened tomorrow at 3:30 or at the end of orders of the day.

*The committee adjourned at 1803.*





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## **Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

Wednesday 21 June 2000

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

Mercredi 21 juin 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of the Environment

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Environnement

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Anne Stokes

Président : Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 21 June 2000

Mercredi 21 juin 2000

*The committee met at 1539 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I'll call this meeting to order. For the information of members, just as a reminder, we start off with the third party and their remaining three minutes, followed by the government caucus. Minister, staff and everyone who's here, thank you for joining us.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Minister, are you aware of this cabinet submission dated March 14, 2000? It's called A Cleaner Ontario: Toughest Penalties Legislation, Environmental SWAT Teams, and a Toll-free Pollution Hotline.

**Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):** Which vote in the book are we on?

**Mr Hampton:** Simple question: Are you aware of this document?

**The Chair:** General vote. Vote 1101

**Hon Mr Newman:** We're still on 1101. OK. That's good.

**Mr Hampton:** Were you aware of this document?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No such document has gone before cabinet.

**Mr Hampton:** I didn't ask you if this particular document went before cabinet. I said, are you aware of this document? Were you aware of this document in your ministry?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you again that no document like that has gone before cabinet.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, it has a position on it for your signature—it's on page 28 of 28—and for the signature of the deputy minister. Did the deputy minister or any other official in the ministry brief you about this document or the information contained in this document?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think that document says "draft" on it. Is that correct?

**Mr Hampton:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Oh, it does say "draft." OK. I can tell you—

**Mr Hampton:** Did the deputy minister or any other official in the ministry brief you about the contents of this document?

**The Chair:** Please let the minister respond.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that opportunity. I can tell you that indeed in the Blue-

print document, this document here, there was a firm commitment to an environment SWAT team being put in place.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, did the deputy minister or any other official in the ministry brief you about this cabinet submission—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, am I not allowed to answer the question?

**Mr Hampton:** —or the information contained in it?

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton, I'll ask you to address your comments through the Chair. Mr Newman, you've answered the question?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I haven't. I was getting to it. I was trying to point out that in this Blueprint document here, which was the campaign commitment of the party of which I am a member—

**The Chair:** Minister, please answer the question you've been asked.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying. This is very pertinent to what we're talking about. It says: "To help enforce these new penalties, we'll create an 'environmental SWAT team,' a specialized group of environment ministry staff who will audit industries to make sure they're obeying the rules.

"We'll also combine the patchwork quilt of laws that protect the environment into one clear, comprehensive and easily enforced set of environmental laws."

So there is a commitment on the part of the governing party to ensure that an environmental SWAT team is in place and I can tell you again—

**Mr Hampton:** I'll ask the question for the fourth time. Did the deputy minister or any other official in the ministry—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you again—

**Mr Hampton:** —brief you about this document?

**The Chair:** Mr Hampton, I'm going to have to ask you to please address your comments through the Chair. Mr Newman, it sounds like you're finishing up. Could you please continue?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I'm trying to tie it together. There are several commitments with respect to the environment. I have made the commitment as environment minister to ensure that each and every one of those commitments that have been made with respect to the environment are indeed fulfilled. In the Common Sense Revolution—

**Mr Hampton:** You might as well tell us now because it's going to come out at the inquiry.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** A point of order, Mr Chair, if I may.

**The Chair:** Mr O'Toole, if you have a point of order, please cite the order or the precedent.

**Mr O'Toole:** The constant interruption of the minister when trying to respond is not appropriate.

**The Chair:** No, that's not a point of order. I will chair this meeting, Mr O'Toole. Mr Hampton, I will ask you to address your comments through the Chair and to please await your recognition for the question. We're just wasting time. I'd prefer not to do that. I'm looking for the co-operation of all parties.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The point I'm trying to make is that I, as environment minister, am going to ensure that all of the environmental commitments that we made in this document are indeed fulfilled, because in the 1994 document, the Common Sense Revolution, each and every one of those commitments was kept. Those promises that were made have been kept by the government. I am going to ensure that each and every one of the commitments in the environmental section of the Blueprint document is indeed adhered to.

**Mr Hampton:** The Premier has said that this document is as phony as a three-dollar bill and doesn't exist. Do you agree with the Premier?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're talking about a document there. I can tell you that no such document has gone before cabinet.

**Mr Hampton:** The Premier has said that this document doesn't exist and that it's as phony as a three-dollar bill. Do you agree with the Premier?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I believe I've answered your question, Mr Hampton.

**The Chair:** You've got 30 seconds.

**Mr Hampton:** This document says that it would have cost your government \$17.6 million to hire the 134 inspectors, enforcement officers and technical staff. This is March 14. This is before Walkerton. The first thing listed in the outcomes is better protection of Ontario's drinking water. Can you tell me why you and your government turned down this document when it gives you a clear path to providing better protection for Ontario's drinking water at a cost of only \$17.6 million a year or less?

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I can tell you is that we did make a commitment in our Blueprint document to have an environmental SWAT team in place, the specialized group of Ministry of the Environment staff who are going to audit industry to make sure they're obeying the rules. That's what I can tell you our commitment is.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, the time has expired. You will have another opportunity. We will now turn to the government caucus.

**Mr O'Toole:** I would like to preface any questions I have with generally striking the tone of the intention of the government caucus members here, which is to ask questions that are pertinent to the estimates of the

Ministry of the Environment. To this point, I have found that, because of the media-worthiness of Walkerton, this has precipitated into an aggressive, overassumptive kind of argument from the third party—Mr Hampton. It is in no way relevant in most cases to the process of the estimates itself.

I will be asking the minister about his responsibilities, which are—as I saw in his 30-minute presentation at the beginning—to focus the resources of the ministry on investigation and enforcement. I am convinced that if we can determine that through appropriate questions, the Ministry of the Environment and its business plan can be better understood by the people of Ontario.

If this is only to be used by Mr Hampton as a political platform to ingratiate his own position, I find it's not the process of the estimates to do that.

**Mr Hampton:** Are you going to shut it down now?

**Mr O'Toole:** I would like to have my time as my time. In fact, I'm going to make one other point for the record. It's important.

As you know, the Speaker of the Legislature of Ontario ruled today pretty much, as you would understand, to say that there shouldn't be interruption. Furthermore, during the 30-minute preamble to the estimates process, the NDP launched into a very aggressive kind of staccato questioning, which we witnessed here again today, that I find is more theatre than substance. That has to be put on the record.

It's my interpretation that the Speaker of the Legislature agreed substantively with our position and our argument. We have questions we need answers to. We want answers to the questions, not just about Walkerton, but about the environment. That includes the air, water and soil. I am going to relinquish this time to Mr Barrett, who has been part of the discussions and is parliamentary assistant to the minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your comments in general. I am just going to take one second, and I won't take it from your time.

There was a ruling by the Speaker today, perhaps not exactly as characterized, but I think it is helpful that each member of the committee receive a copy of the ruling so they are able to know what that determination was. I certainly want to advise each member of the committee that we will be bound by that interpretation, which I see as consistent with my outlook. It may not have been adequately explained, but certainly I feel very comfortable pursuing what the Speaker is recommending.

Now we will continue with the government caucus.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I wish to question the minister or, if need be, ministry staff with respect to acid rain. More specifically, I would like some more detailed information on the status, past and present, of the acid rain deposition program.

Certainly this was on the public agenda. As I recall, in the 1970s and the 1980s there was so much in the news about that. Back in 1984 the program received funding of something like \$10 million and monitored something like 40 monthly sites. In 1992 and 1993, during the NDP era,



deposition funding was reduced to \$100,000 and the number of sites had decreased to 24.

Leading off from that, I'm certainly aware that the federal government is involved in this program. There is a supportive role, as I understand it, between the Ontario government and the federal government. Very specifically, it's my understanding that the federal government has ceased to fulfill its funding commitment to this joint acid rain program.

1550

Minister, what does this mean to this program and what does it mean with respect to the ability of the province to continue to monitor acid rain? Again, I ask this question in light of the ruling. I have not had a chance to read it, but I understand and I have certainly observed over the last five years a well-established practice that ministry staff be called on to provide answers. I'm interested in some very detailed answers beyond what one would hear from a politician, if I can put it that way.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The Countdown Acid Rain program has indeed been in existence since 1985. It has been a very successful initiative in terms of the amount of information that we've been able to accumulate, as well as to the quality of that information.

The function of the program was to monitor air and precipitation samples and to track emerging trends in order to supplement Environment Canada data, as well as our own, and to better understand the links to acid rain while enhancing our strategy against it.

Ontario's Countdown Acid Rain program and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's 1990 Clean Air Act amendments were two of the regulatory approaches used to reduce acidifying emissions and their effects in Ontario. The success of these regulatory approaches has provided us with an excellent model of acid rain trends and means that intensive monitoring activities can be redirected to the next phases of the program.

My ministry continues to provide acid rain deposition mapping, using its sophisticated mathematical models and Environment Canada monitoring data. We also continue to support university partnerships to provide long-term assessments of aquatic and biological effects caused by acid deposition and acid-sensitive watersheds.

In fact, in 1984 the program received funding of \$10 million and monitored over 40 monthly and 16 daily sites. Approximately \$1 million was allotted to deposition activities. By 1992-93, deposition funding had been reduced to \$100,000 and the number of sites had decreased to 24.

By 1993-94, the number of monitoring sites had been reduced to 16. As of the conclusion of the deposition phase of the program, there were 13 monthly sites, one daily site and three special study sites in Sudbury.

The natural conclusion of some aspects of the program have allowed the next steps to be taken. The government is making great progress in its efforts to reduce and eliminate acid rain. We currently have partnerships with

Laurentian, Trent and York universities to provide long-term assessments of aquatic and biological effects caused by acid deposition in acid-sensitive watersheds in the Dorset, Sudbury and Killarney areas.

The mandatory emissions monitoring and reporting regulation announced January 24 will also help reduce smog, acid rain, air toxins and climate-change-contributing emissions and improve air quality in Ontario. The ministry will continue to monitor smog precursors, particulate matter, including acid-related sulphates and nitrates, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ozone at over 70 sites across Ontario.

To further expand upon this, I am now going to call upon Ed Piché.

**Mr Edward Piché:** Beginning as yesterday, my name is Edward Piché. I am director of the environmental monitoring and reporting branch of the environmental sciences and standards division of the Ministry of the Environment. It's my pleasure to be here today.

If I can pick up and expand a little on what the minister said, there is a story here that all Ontarians, and in fact North Americans, should take some pride in. The story began in the mid-1970s and the focal point was actually in 1979, with the inauguration of the acidic precipitation in Ontario study of.

In fact, at that time the government of the day committed in excess of \$10 million, and for a considerable period of time after that, other governments in North America, principally in the United States, contributed very significant amounts of money, because the relationship between emissions of oxides or gases containing sulphur and nitrogen and what happened in the environment wasn't entirely clear.

At that time, Ontario established over 40 sites to measure deposition of the material that comes down in the environment. The thesis was going back to the time of Newton that whatever goes up comes down. That was before rockets and space flight and so on. In any event, the problem was that there were a lot of naysayers who didn't understand the relationship between what went up and what came down. They said, "If one molecule of sulphur went up, five molecules could come down." Obviously, that required a lot of investigation.

Over that period of time, Ontario, together with various partners including a knowledgeable and supportive public, established a large number of sites in Ontario where we measured the deposition of these materials going into the environment. We also embarked on very aggressive programs with the federal government to attempt to persuade our American colleagues and friends that what they were doing down there was having a very great and significant impact on us.

As the program evolved, as the minister said, culminating in the mid-1980s with these key initiatives for the Countdown Acid Rain program in Ontario and, in 1990, as a consequence of very aggressive communication programs that Ontario engaged in with the federal government, the so-called promulgation in November 1990 of the Clean Air Act, those programs together—the

Countdown Acid Rain one in Ontario and the EPA Clean Air Act in the United States—had a very significant impact in reducing emissions of sulphur. Our monitoring program demonstrated that that in fact was the case.

Together with those programs, again beginning in the late 1970s, we had intensive partnerships, with the Ministry of Natural Resources, with various universities in Ontario, with Inco Ltd in Sudbury, at various times with Ontario Hydro and also with Falconbridge, to investigate the impact of the deposition on lakes, both in the greater Sudbury area and in central and eastern Ontario, the Muskoka-Haliburton area.

What we have seen over that period of time, and again factually since 1971, has been an 83% reduction in emissions of sulphur from the complexes in Sudbury. What has been the consequence of that for the environment in Ontario and in eastern North America? Very significant improvement in the lakes in the greater Sudbury area; in fact, unprecedented improvements on a world basis. There is no comparable experiment anywhere in the world that has the database or the consequence of abatement action.

In the greater Dorset-Muskoka-Haliburton area, the so-called playground of the good part of Ontario, there has been in excess of a 30% improvement in lakes in that area. The story is not completely good, though. There are still some lakes in that area that aren't progressing as we would like. So we have continued with our so-called biogeochemical studies, these calibrated watershed studies in the Muskoka-Haliburton area, focused more energy and effort there, and decoupled from areas where we understand the physics and chemistry; that is, the deposition monitoring.

All of this has been done over that period of time in partnership with municipalities, with academia, with industry and with the federal government. Collectively, as I said, that information has painted a very important picture, a very constructive picture and, I would like to think, a successful picture of what can happen when appropriate actions are taken and what benefits can be measured.

The story isn't completed yet. Earlier this year the government made a commitment to a further very significant reduction in our contribution to the problem in lieu of this feedback that we have from those environmental monitoring activities. We are continuing our partnerships in Sudbury, in Killarney and in Muskoka-Haliburton.

I failed to mention earlier that one of our key partners is the Norwegian institute of the environment. They have been a partner with us now for several years. Some of you may be aware that there's very significant similar phenomena in Europe. We have worked very closely internationally, as well as nationally.

We're continuing to monitor the success of the reductions and will continue to do so until such time as the broad community is satisfied that the actions taken are necessary and sufficient to restore and improve the environment to a level acceptable to all Ontarians.

**1600**

**Mr Barrett:** Mr Chair, if I could continue, with the permission of my colleagues, I have another question in the area of air quality but a slightly different tack. I think today's the first day of summer. As I understand it, there have already been a number of smog alerts, Minister, an obvious indicator of impact on air quality. As we go into summer, the potential for smog days increases. There will be a possibility for more smog alerts, I'm assuming. I know it's important for everyone to do their part. But there is a responsibility on governments, municipal and at the provincial level.

I'm aware of a guide to municipalities titled Smog Alert: A Municipal Response Guide, which details good examples of things that we can all do to reduce the effect on air quality. We did hear what I consider a very detailed explanation of the Drive Clean program yesterday. Specifically, further to Drive Clean, what are we doing to continue to protect air quality in the province of Ontario? I don't know whether Mr Piché has further information.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll call up Walter Chan.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** May I just add that we have about two and a half minutes or so, so conduct your response in that time.

**Dr Walter Chan:** My name is Walter Chan. I am assistant director of the air policy and climate change branch of the ministry. I want to describe for you a multi-stakeholder forum which the ministry has set up to engage stakeholders in the battle against smog and improvement of air quality. The anti-smog action plan is a multi-stakeholder forum which was set up by the Ontario government back in 1996 to address the issue of smog in Ontario. The plan was initially named Ontario's Smog Plan, which is familiar to most people. It was renamed the anti-smog action plan, in short ASAP, in October 1999.

Being aware of the health and environmental impacts associated with smog, which includes ground level ozone and fine particulate, Ontario was proactive in preparing a discussion paper, Towards a Smog Plan for Ontario, and organizing a two-day workshop back in June 1996. At that point, we began the journey to improve air quality due to smog. About 150 people participated in this two-day workshop. At the end of the workshop, Ontario proposed air quality reduction targets for the stakeholders and invited them to join us in a partnership to work together collectively to address the issue.

In September 1996, the first meeting of the Smog Plan steering committee was held and we agreed on a structure, including a number of working groups to follow. The working groups will help develop information on emissions, look at technology information and propose initiatives which would allow us to reduce smog precursors.

In January 1998, the steering committee published Ontario's Smog Plan: A Partnership for Collective Action.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have about a minute.

**Dr Chan:** In this document, the partnership affirmed the collective goal of 45% NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs reduction from



the 1990 levels and also proposed to develop a particulate strategy. In the meantime, since we did not know very much about the particulate issue, we also announced an interim goal of 10% minimum reduction of emissions that would contribute towards particulate formation in the atmosphere.

At this moment, over 50 partners, including industry, companies and governments, have signed the Anti-Smog Accord. Many other partners, who did not sign the accord for a number of reasons, also participate in the ASAP operating committee, including a number of environmental and health groups as well as the federal government and municipal governments.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. I will have to stop you with that. Mr Bradley.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** If I may go back to the document entitled A Cleaner Ontario, to which reference has been made, this cabinet document which has "draft" on the outside, "draft" is an interesting word that allows ministers, I am told, to be evasive about whether it's a cabinet document or not. So I'm going to try to smoke out of you, or I should say ask the question, whether anyone in your ministry has seen this document, whether you specifically, your deputy minister, or any senior person in your ministry has seen this. I can't believe a document of this kind could exist as extensively as it does and not appropriately consult the ministry.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I have not seen the document. I can tell you that there was a Blueprint commitment to have a SWAT team.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm aware of that.

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I want to make something perfectly clear. I think it's important for everyone here today—

**Mr Bradley:** You answered that for Mr Hampton.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, sometimes members aren't listening, and I want to take that opportunity—

**Mr Bradley:** Or sometimes ministers are trying to skate.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying to answer your question to the best of my ability. I can tell you that in 1994 we brought forward a document called the Common Sense Revolution. It had a series of promises and commitments that the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario ran on as its platform. It's a platform that was put out clearly one year before the election. We fulfilled our commitment in that document.

This document, which was for the 1999 campaign, the Blueprint document, "Mike Harris's Plan to Keep Ontario on the Right Track," had specific commitments with respect to the environment, one of them of course being the environmental SWAT team. I want to quote from that. It says, "The Strongest Enforcement in Canada. To help enforce these new penalties," which refers back to the fact that we made a commitment to have the toughest penalties in the country with respect to the environment, we would actually see a doubling of the maximum fines for first-time offences—

**Mr Bradley:** It's all in the document. I've seen it.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —which would go from \$1 million to \$2 million, and then for repeat offenders the maximum fine would go from \$2 million to \$4 million. So when it refers to the penalties, those are the penalties it refers to. Then it goes on to say—

**Mr Bradley:** I will take that as a given.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying to answer, Chair.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm actually happy with the answer you've given me.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, I'm not, because I want to give better.

**Mr Bradley:** I am delighted with the answer you've given me so far, and I would like to go on to another question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It says that we're going to create "an 'environmental SWAT team'—a specialized group of environment ministry staff who will audit industries to make sure they're obeying the rules.

"We'll also combine the patchwork quilt of laws that protect the environment into one clear, comprehensive and easily enforced set of environmental laws.

"We also think that the public can be a tremendous resource for protecting our environment against polluters."

**Mr Bradley:** Once I say I'm satisfied with the answer, that should be all I get.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Just to wrap up, "To help people get more involved in protecting the environment, we'll develop and promote a toll-free pollution hotline"—

**Mr Bradley:** This doesn't do you any good.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —"for Ontarians to report possible acts of pollution."

Those are some of the commitments that we've made. In answer to your question, yes, the SWAT team was one of the commitments we made.

**Mr Bradley:** I specifically didn't ask that. What I asked was whether you had seen the document, whether the deputy minister had seen the document, or any senior officials. All it required was a yes or no answer. I'd be delighted to hear that yes or no answer. Did you—you said no, you did not. I take you at your word.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Mr Bradley:** Did your deputy minister or any other senior staff within your ministry see this document?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question. Again, it is a Blueprint commitment. I can assure you—

**Mr Bradley:** You've answered by not answering.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —that I'm going to ensure that happens.

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**Mr Bradley:** Why would this document have been killed? It looks like a very extensive proposal. Normally, as you would know, because you're a minister, this goes through committees of cabinet and it has to be vetted by the Premier's office. My worry is that it got killed in the Premier's office, but perhaps that is not the case. Can you figure out how this document got off the rails, how it was before you, before cabinet in some way or other, and then it got off the rails?



**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I'm asking for a ruling here from the Chair. There's a lot of leeway on questioning, but when questions are direct and then become vague as to who knew where a report was—

**Mr Bradley:** I was specific.

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, that is not a point of order. I will just remind members: Please cite order or precedents in raising points of order. I'd be very happy to hear them for the better process of the committee. Mr Bradley.

**Mr Bradley:** The timing of this document is very interesting because it came in March of this year. That was before Walkerton; that was before there was a lot of media attention being devoted to the environment. Certainly, while there were questions in the House, opposition critics would have had to scurry to get anyone to pay attention and you would have been able to slip through the scrum quickly. After Walkerton, there is a lot of interest in this.

Do you think that perhaps it got scuttled in March, which was just before the budget was announced, and you need budget consideration for this, because there was a perception by many in government—I'm not saying you, but many in government—that somehow environment wasn't a front-burner issue so therefore it was safe to at best postpone it, or at worst deep-six it?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's a hypothetical question you're asking that I can't give you an answer to.

**Mr Bradley:** So you cannot answer that question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I said is—

**Mr Bradley:** I understand.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Let me be very clear: I said I don't answer hypothetical questions.

**Mr Bradley:** I understand. In the document, on page 3 of 28, it says, "Historically, the ministry approach of working co-operatively with industry to develop workable solutions to reduce their pollutant releases has been only moderately successful. The existing low inspection rate referred to above allows numerous industries the opportunity to break the law."

Was that your perception, that after the cuts of 1995 and 1996, the huge and massive cuts to your budget and staff, the "existing low inspection rate referred to above allows numerous industries the opportunity to break the law"? Would you agree with that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I just want to refer to my notes here on staffing issues because there shouldn't have been any effect on front-line services with the numbers of staff.

In the mid-1990s there were various constraint programs that netted selected funding increases. In the government's expenditure control in 1993-94, \$50.7 million was cut from the ministry, including \$2 million in salaries. In the late 1990s, significant budgetary reductions took place, during 1996-97 and 1997-98. These were strategic business plan reductions that included eliminating the subsidy programs and attendant administration, which was 62 staff and \$153.3 million. There's the termination of 10 agencies, boards and committees:

44 staff, \$4.9 million. There were 229 operations staff, including the closure of three regional laboratories. That was 50 staff, keeping in mind that at time half of the municipalities and public utilities weren't using the ministry labs to do their testing. There are 37 district environmental officers, seven investigative support staff, 32 management positions, 44 administrative positions and 59 scientific, technical and professional staff.

What the operations staff reductions focused on was the fact that there was refocusing and restructuring of compliance, enforcement and technical activities by reorganizing and merging district offices, focusing on land use policy as opposed to specialized land use approvals.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you. I'll cry uncle now and I'll move on to another question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** There's also regional restructuring—

**The Chair:** Minister, I just wanted to tell you that I appreciate your commitment in providing full answers, but within reason, I hope you'll agree that you'll allow for questioning as well.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm satisfied with that answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But, Chair, am I not allowed to answer the question?

**Mr Bradley:** That was very helpful to me.

**The Chair:** Just by way of guidance, because we have some time left in the hearings and I think it would be helpful for everyone, I'd just refer you to the Speaker's ruling. It indicates that it is the role of the Chair to ensure the answers that are given are on topic, and I will rule on that from time to time. I will rule as little as possible. I would again ask for a fair give-and-take in terms of when it is the time for each of the parties they can determine how they wish to ask questions and hopefully there's reasonable time given for an answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I was just wrapping up, Chair.

**Mr Bradley:** On page 2 of 28—

**Mr Barrett:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: The Speaker's ruling makes reference to: "the Chair should need to inject him- or herself into the proceedings of a committee only relatively rarely. The Chair should be an impartial, largely silent observer of the committee's proceedings who has no voice except in the case of disorder."

Again, this is my experience, having chaired a standing committee for four years. I tried to follow that guideline and I find it heartening that the Speaker has presented this very recently in the Legislature. So only in the case of disorder—

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, Mr Barrett. It is not a point of order. I appreciate your drawing it to our attention. Each person has in front of them the ruling of the Speaker. I want to be clear: We will stay on topic. The estimates committee is unique in the sense that there is a part of this proceeding which is about questions and answers. It is completely up to the minister to give an answer or not give an answer, but it is important, and the Speaker has affirmed, that there not be unduly long

answers and that the answers be on topic, and those will be my guidelines in terms of ruling. I hope that all members of the committee will exhibit the goodwill that we need.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Chair—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr Mazzilli, please cite precedent or something from the orders.

**Mr Bradley:** You're looking bad doing this, Frank.

**Mr Mazzilli:** The reports by committees, I'd like to—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, that's not a point of order, Mr Mazzilli.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm going to go to a question. On page 2 of 28 of the confidential document, the March 14, 2000, draft, it says the following:

"Less than 10% of sources of pollution in the province (those most likely to cause health or environmental problems) are inspected in any one year. The capacity for inspection and investigation activities needs to be increased and the compliance and enforcement approach needs to be toughened so that the ministry can effectively and visibly deter those who choose to operate outside of the law and threaten public health and our air, land and water."

Would you agree, Mr Minister, that less than 10% of the sources of pollution in the province—and they are the ones most likely to cause health or environmental problems—are inspected in any one year? Would you agree with that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Do I think there are inspections done—

**Mr Bradley:** Less than 10%, it says, are done in a year. Would you agree with that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** For example, on the water facilities, I can tell you this year that we are going to inspect every one of the 630 facilities in the province. That's a commitment that I've made and a commitment that I'm going to ensure—

**Mr Bradley:** That's after Walkerton.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Give me the opportunity. You've asked a question on inspections. I just want to answer that for you. Again, the 630 facilities in the province are going to be inspected. We're going to ensure that they're visited and that proper inspection takes place by qualified personnel. We're going to ensure that any facility that is not in compliance will be brought into compliance by field orders. I can tell you that in fact they're all going to be done. We're going to go beyond that and ensure that the certificates of approval for each facility are reviewed. In the end there'll be one certificate of approval for each facility in Ontario. After that, we're going to ensure that certificates of approval are reviewed every three years after that.

**1620**

But with respect to the number of inspections, I can tell you that in the year 1999-2000 inspections conducted by the operations division staff were 7,055. I look back to 1994-95 and the number was 7,010. So we've seen an increase over the 1994-95 numbers and increases over all the other years. In the past year there have been 7,055

inspections. That deals with air. It deals with pesticides. It deals with the waste issue, both hazardous and liquid industrial waste; solid and non-hazardous waste as well. Many inspections were done there. Also with sewage: Municipal, private and commercial operations are being inspected, industrial sewage is being inspected; communal water systems, surface water and groundwater are being inspected. There have been many, inspections done by the operations division staff; in fact, an increase over the 1994-95 numbers in the past year.

**Mr Bradley:** Let me try to help you out with the Treasurer. In the document, on page 11 of 28, it says: "The ministry intends to have SWAT staff field operational by the fall of 2000. This is an ambitious time frame and requires a series of actions and resources commencing early in 2000."

In fact, in the budget for the 2000-01, the upcoming budget, your budget was cut substantially and yet it says you were to implement the SWAT team by the fall of 2000. Does that not really mean, then, that the government abandoned or at least significantly postponed the implementation of this policy? If indeed your budget was cut and they said that you would need a series of actions and resources commencing early in 2000, how can you have a budget cut and at the same time implement this policy?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, with respect to the budget numbers, let's keep in mind why some of the numbers are what they are. First off, we're not funding the Y2K situation, because it doesn't need to be funded. If you're suggesting today that we should put more money into the Y2K situation, I disagree with you, because that problem has been solved. We don't need to spend \$8 million on the Y2K problem, because we are past that. There are other costs from the previous year—relocation costs; I understand around \$2 million in relocation costs that are one-time costs. There have been salary awards for staff totalling about \$1 million. These are costs that were from the previous year. There have been staff and money transferred to the shared serves bureau of Management Board of Cabinet.

We saw the provincial water protection fund accelerate. You'd be aware that that program was to be over a three-year period. The money was accelerated so that municipalities could take advantage of the money earlier over a two-year basis. We saw it as a priority. That's why we accelerated that money. Instead of having it over the three years, we did it over two years to assist municipalities.

It goes on and on. The important thing is that the number of investigators, for example, within the ministry has remained the same. No investigators have been reduced in field offices. I point out to you and I think I pointed out before, but I'll point it out again, there were 44 investigators in 1995 and today there are 44.

We've taken strong measures within the Ministry of the Environment to continue to protect the environment. In fact, in the fall of 1998 the government introduced Bill 82, the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act.



**Mr Bradley:** I remember that. That's history now.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But it's very important to what the discussion is today. Bill 82 introduced a number of significant amendments which enhanced the Ministry of the Environment's ability to enforce laws which protect the environment. I see this as a good thing. I'm not sure if you do or not, but I see this as a very positive step forward. The legislation creates a regulatory authority for administrative monetary penalties—I think you had a question on that the other day—and also for electronic service and submission of documents to the ministry. This is a good way to do business in the province.

What the administrative monetary penalty regulations do—they've been drafted in a draft regulation, as I'm sure you're aware—

**Mr Bradley:** Uncle, uncle, uncle. I call uncle. The next question—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to finish, Chair.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm satisfied with the answer. I want to tell you that. So let's go to the next one.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But I haven't even finished.

**Mr Bradley:** Doesn't this document, Minister, really represent a cry from your ministry for the resources to do the job that the Ministry of the Environment is mandated to do, that you, as minister, need these resources, that the ministry staff who are here today need these resources? Doesn't this document, which talks about at least 137 people for your so-called SWAT team, up to hundreds of people to be hired by the ministry and more resources, really represent a cry from your ministry for the resources they expect, they need and they deserve and that you need to do your job as Minister of the Environment?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I would draw to your attention the fact that that was a campaign commitment in the Blueprint document.

**Mr Bradley:** No money.

**Hon Mr Newman:** With respect to having an environmental SWAT team, we clearly said that. I can tell you that as Minister of the Environment I'm going to ensure that every environmental commitment in the Blueprint document becomes reality. I can tell you that's going to be my commitment to the people of Ontario.

But again, let's look back at the inspections that took place. Let's compare the numbers from 1994-95 to last year.

**Mr Bradley:** You've given those and I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Minister, I'm going to have to interject.

**Mr Bradley:** I appreciate that very much.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, with all due respect, I'm trying to answer the question.

**Mr Bradley:** You've given me the information and I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** If the information's already given, Mr Minister, then we'll return to questions.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm going to ask your opinion, because you've been around the House now for a little over five years. This document is a cry from your ministry for the resources it needs to do its job; a cry from you, if you

will, for the resources you need to do your job. Why do you think it was deep-sixed and where do you think it was deep-sixed: in the Premier's office, in the cabinet? Where do you think this document was deep-sixed?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think that's a presumption on your part. But again, I take you back to the Blueprint document: the fact that we made a commitment to have an environmental SWAT team. I again tell you, that as minister I'm going to ensure that each and every one of the environmental commitments made in the Blueprint document become reality. I make that commitment to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Chair: On June 13 the NDP started right into questions, deferring their opening statement. I certainly ask for a ruling from the Chair as to when they will be making their 30-minute opening statement. The Speaker has ruled that that is part of the process.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr Mazzilli, I could inquire of the Speaker exactly what was intended. We have had a convention here, for at least the last three years, that the opening statement involves a choice of statements or questions. If you look, in fact, to the Speaker's ruling, he says it's quite in order for anyone to ask questions, it just isn't a requirement that the minister answer them.

**Mr Mazzilli:** From the Chair, was that clearly indicated to the minister?

**The Chair:** I wasn't sitting in the chair, but I'll refer you to Hansard when the Hon Mr Curling was sitting in the chair, and he asked for statements from each of the parties and did not invite questions. Each party conducted itself accordingly, subsequently.

So, Mr Mazzilli, I think you'll agree that the time we spend on points of procedure is added to the environment ministry's time when they have to return, so I don't wish to inconvenience the minister or his staff or any of you. I'd like to now turn to Ms Churley.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood):** I'll give a brief statement here. I see that the government backbenchers here are trying every way they can to bring up points of order to avoid the minister having to answer my questions. I guess I can be flattered by that.

Let me now get on to asking my questions. Minister, I want to get to the bottom of this document, this cabinet document, and who saw it, who was aware of it and to what level it went up within your ministry. I heard you in the scum deny that you knew about the existence of this document. Did you ask your deputy what happened with this document?

1630

**Hon Mr Newman:** The document has "draft" on it and I've not seen that document.

**Ms Churley:** I asked you if you asked your deputy what happened with this document after question period today. Despite what your Premier said about this being as phony as a three-dollar bill and it didn't exist, you now know that it does exist. You said you didn't see it; have you asked your deputy and your staff what became of this cabinet submission? I'd like an answer to that.



**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, it's a document that has "draft" on it. You would know that we made a commitment in the 1999 campaign to have an environmental SWAT team. I'm going to ensure, as the Minister of the Environment, that that becomes reality, as do the other environmental commitments that are made in the Blueprint document. I'm going to see that that happens, including having the toughest penalties—

**Ms Churley:** I asked a specific question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —doubling the maximum fines for specific first offenders from \$1 million to \$2 million and subsequent fines for repeat offenders from \$2 million to \$4 million.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, I'm sorry, but I asked a specific question. If I wanted information about that, I would ask you, and I may yet.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm simply answering the question.

**Ms Churley:** I asked you if you'd asked your deputy or your staff what became of this, and yes, it says on it "draft" cabinet submission. As an ex-minister, I remember many draft cabinet submissions. I can assure you, Minister, when it gets to this stage, where there's a page in there for cabinet sign-off and the minister's sign-off, my political staff would be aware of it and I would be made aware of it at this stage. I would assume that it went as far as committee. I want an answer as to where this cabinet document ended up. It's very, very complete.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That may have been the procedure when you were in government.

**Ms Churley:** OK, I guess you're not going to answer that question. But minister, I'd say to you that—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Ms Churley:** —this cabinet submission is clearly—I read through it carefully—in my view, a cry for help. The way this is drafted, in fact, it recommends that there should be 500 new staff hired. I think that the feeling was they weren't going to get that, so they ended up asking for 138 new staff. Although, having said that, to really be able to inspect all points of pollution, up to 500 should be hired. As you know, you let over 900 go.

They were reduced to coming up with the SWAT team idea so that it would cost just about \$18 million. Let me ask you, Minister, if that's the case, with all the cries for help and all of the information we now know, that we've asked you and the Premier daily in the House—both internally, within the ministry, you were warned that there were problems with our water, and externally, time and time again. Even if you hadn't seen it yourself, which you said you hadn't, it was very clear there were repeated attempts by staff and outside of staff to warn you there was a problem. I want to ask you, therefore, when you have a cabinet submission that recommends the lesser option of spending about \$18 million, why in the world—if you were committed to at least this SWAT team—would you have allowed another \$16 million to be taken out of the 2000 budget when it's almost the exact amount that was needed for this SWAT team?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's not a cabinet submission. It has "draft" on it.

**Ms Churley:** I can't hear you, Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But I bring to your attention the fact that, again, there've been no investigators reduced in the ministry. There were 44 investigators in 1995; there are 44 today. With respect to inspections, there were 7,055 total inspections within the ministry through the operations division by staff with respect to air and pesticides, waste—hazardous, liquid, industrial and solid—and also non-hazardous waste, municipal, private and commercial sewage operations, industrial sewage, communal water systems, surface and groundwater. So we see more inspections in the year 1999-2000 than in 1994-95. But when I look at it—I know you probably—

**Ms Churley:** Minister, you're just not answering my question again.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying to answer the question. You may not like my answer, but I'm answering your question.

**Ms Churley:** It isn't the answer to my question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Because you're not letting me finish again.

*Interjections.*

**Ms Churley:** Take it easy, guys.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I encourage you to look at the Liberal red book of 1995.

**Ms Churley:** I don't care about the Liberal red book. We've got 18 people dead here, and you're talking to me about the Liberal red book.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It says, "The NDP has promised to overhaul 'the air pollution laws of the province.' Yet the government has cut funding for air pollution measures by 50%—"

**Ms Churley:** Just answer the question.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, I'd ask you—

**Hon Mr Newman:** —"ignored air pollution generated by stationary sources"—

**The Chair:** Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —"and failed to deal effectively with greenhouse gases."

**The Chair:** Minister, please. You need to respond in the direction of the Chair so we can maintain order.

**Ms Churley:** I would ask you to please address your questions through the Chair. I will give you every opportunity to ask questions.

**Ms Churley:** OK. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have already asked the minister to stay on topic, and we believe in good faith that he will and the committee will proceed.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, I would like your deputy to answer directly, if he would. Perhaps he knows—

**Mr Mazzilli:** Point of order, Mr Chair: There's no authority to ask questions directly to the deputy minister. They're addressed to the minister.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr Mazzilli, you are not on a point of order, and I'll ask you to please wait for your time.

**Ms Churley:** I'll put it this way, Mr Chair: I'm asking the minister if we could hear from his deputy, because perhaps he knows what happened to this very complete cabinet submission with very clear recommendations in it. I'm asking you if you would allow your deputy to answer that question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again I can tell you we made a commitment in the Blueprint document to have an environmental SWAT team in place, and I'm going to ensure that happens.

**Ms Churley:** So you won't allow your deputy to answer the question as to what happened to this document.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question.

**Ms Churley:** OK. I want to turn to the hiring of new staff. I want to say for the record that I know that staff at the Ministry of the Environment have been struggling very hard to cope with the cuts that have happened under your watch. This is by no means a criticism of any staff within the Ministry of the Environment. In fact, from time to time I have heard from particular staff people asking for my assistance to try to get reinforcements and new staff hired in the ministry to help them.

I want to turn to the Ministry of the Environment estimates briefing book, 2000-01. If you turn to pages 9 and 10, on page 9 there's a graph which shows the programs and standard accounts overall summary for both operating and capital. Under "services," which is fourth down the list, you see ministry administration, \$21 million; environmental protection, \$33 million; conservation and stewardship etc. That's 24% of ministry spending under your very reduced budget. The total is \$55.056 million. I want to ask you what "services" means. I'm very concerned about contracting out and, if you look at these figures, I believe there is some contracting out involved. I want to know, out of all those figures, this 24% of your budget, how many of these numbers would mean contracting services outside the ministry?

**Hon Mr Newman:** This is Carmen Gauthier, director of business and fiscal planning.

**Ms Carmen Gauthier:** The services account comprises a variety of payments, including a payment of around \$15 million to the Ontario Realty Corp for rents that are charged, various services, maintenance contracts on our office equipment and the like, studies—in this case, we have monies for contracts. The consultants who are working on our Drive Clean program are using around 17 million of these dollars to deliver the program.

**Ms Churley:** Seventeen?

**Ms Gauthier:** I believe that's the—

**Ms Churley:** That's fine. OK. I don't have a lot of time here. I'm sorry if I'm rushing you a bit.

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**Ms Gauthier:** There's approximately \$9 million associated with our cleanup of the Deloro project, the arsenic-contaminated site. We have a number of engineering consultants who are helping us do that cleanup. Apart from these, I would say there are very few dollars associated with management consultants in the ministry.

**Ms Churley:** OK. Perhaps at a later date the minister could provide me with a breakdown of these services.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You want a breakdown of all the services?

**Ms Churley:** Particularly any services that involve contracting out of a specific—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Sure. I'm sorry, but I do want to move on.

Coming back to this cabinet document that we released today, Minister, I want to ask you specifically—this report says the preference would be to hire up to 500 new staff in order to deal adequately with the prevention of all pollution. The recommended delivery option here is the hiring of 138 new staff. It says the team would focus on four or five special assignments per year. Do you think, given the other contents of this report and all the other information that has come your way over the past three weeks, that a SWAT team of 138 new staff to deal with four or five special assignments per year is adequate? Do you think that's adequate?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which is adequate? Could you just repeat the last part?

**Ms Churley:** The 138 new staff. The recommendation in the report is that it would be good to hire 500 new staff. The document here says the team they're recommending would be able to focus only on four or five special assignments per year. Do you think that is adequate, given all the information we have now that your ministry is severely underfunded and understaffed in practically every area, if not all?

**Hon Mr Newman:** The whole idea of the SWAT team within the Blueprint document was to be strategic. But again, I draw to your attention that there is a review underway of the ministry right now with respect to policies and procedures so that we can be strategic, so that we're able to position the ministry environment so that it's the best possible Ministry of the Environment it can be for the 21st century. There may very well be recommendations coming back with respect to staffing. I await Valerie Gibbons's recommendations on all the issues with respect to the Ministry of the Environment, including staffing. I will have a look at those recommendations at that point and go from there.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, in the 1999 campaign one of the things the NDP said—and I agree it wasn't a popular move at the time; we didn't do very well in the election—was that we'd take back some of the tax cut and immediately rehire with some of that money 500 new staff to replace some of the ones who have been let go since Mike Harris took office in 1995. Now we have a document that—coincidentally, but I suppose this is real common sense—recommends that 500 would be a good number to rehire in order to deal with pollution in this province. I want to ask you again, given all the information you have from your own ministry and externally, do you think even the 138 new staff are adequate to cover the kinds of pollution control, particularly now that we know, just with water alone—all of the boil water orders?



The Premier's advice yesterday, that people either boil their water or bring bottled water if they're worried about the water, wasn't good enough. Those glib answers don't get us anywhere. We need staff to make sure our water is safe to drink and our air is safe to breathe. Are you going to fight in cabinet for those 500 new staff that have been recommended in this cabinet submission?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, your plan was to take back the tax cut. I think you were selective on people \$80,000—

**Ms Churley:** Individuals, that's right.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Individuals. It would have exempted MPPs. The fact of the matter was if you were going to add money back to the environment budget, you would have been adding money back to the money that you had cut as a government. In 1992-93 to 1993-94, you reduced money in the ministry by \$26.4 million through the managed savings strategy. The 1993-94 budget saw a budget reduction to the Ministry of the Environment of \$22.3 million—\$16.2 million on the capital side, \$6.1 million on the operating side.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, you're trying to compare your environmental record to the NDP. Don't waste your time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that from 1993-94 to 1994-95, the expenditure control plan—

**Ms Churley:** Minister, 18 people are now dead.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —\$55.1 million. In 1994-95 there was \$5 million reduced by the blue box program, \$5.2 million in the capital budget—

**Ms Churley:** Minister, what are you going to do about the problem?

**Hon Mr Newman:** —\$2.5 million—

**Ms Churley:** This is ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, please.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair.

**Ms Churley:** He's not answering my question—

**Hon Mr Newman:** —\$2.5 million to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

**Ms Churley:** —about the hiring of 500 new staff.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The NDP, during their time in office, cut positions at the Ministry of the Environment by 208.

**Ms Churley:** You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I can tell you that in anything we've done we've always tried to put the ministry in the best light. The number of inspections was up last year, 7,055, versus the numbers from 1994-95, which were 7,010. I can tell you that we are doing better here. We're seeing more inspections done.

**Ms Churley:** Are you saying that you haven't drastically reduced the Ministry of the Environment budget to the same level in real dollars as it was in the 1970s when the Ministry of the Environment was first created? I've got the figures here, Minister. It's the reality.

**Hon Mr Newman:** If that's a question, I'm going to take that and I'm going to answer that. Again, I've gone through the numbers within the ministry for you. In 1990-91, the ministry had 3,317 funded positions. It now has 1,501. Since 1990-91—

**Ms Churley:** Minister, do not give me the litany of stuff that you—

**Hon Mr Newman:** —there have been 980 positions transferred to OCWA, 117 positions—

**Ms Churley:** Mr Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, I want to be able to listen to the minister and I can't listen to the minister if you're interjecting.

**Ms Churley:** He's stalling for time and reading out numbers from 1990 to 1995.

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask that the same respect be accorded to him. The minister is entitled to answer within reason if he stays on the point. Ms Churley, I can't hear the minister if you're interjecting.

**Ms Churley:** Sorry.

**The Chair:** Minister, please continue.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm simply trying to draw a comparison. From 1990-91, when you were the government—you may want to deny that you were the government, but you were—980 positions were transferred to the Ontario Clean Water Agency, so you can confirm or deny that; 117 positions were transferred to the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. As you are aware, it was the Ministry of Energy and Environment in the past; it is now the Ministry of the Environment.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, you should be ashamed of yourself.

**Hon Mr Newman:** So 117 positions transferred there. Fifty-six positions have been transferred to the shared services bureau of the Management Board of Cabinet. There are 21 positions at the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

**The Chair:** We've heard that list before and I appreciate—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm sorry—

**The Chair:** I know, but there is a very scarce amount of time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've been asked a question with respect to the budget. The fact that she doesn't want to acknowledge that 21 positions were transferred out of the Ministry of Natural Resources—

**The Chair:** Minister, I'm sorry, but I'm going to ask you to stop there and we'll turn to Ms Churley's next question.

**Ms Churley:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** About a minute.

**Ms Churley:** Well, Minister, it's just scandalous what you're doing here, when we've got 18 people dead to date and you're reciting the numbers from 1990 to 1995. You've been in government since 1995. We're talking about what is going on under your watch. There's nobody in this room or outside the room—it's laughable that you're trying to insinuate that the Ministry of the Environment budget is actually lower now than it was from 1990 to 1995.

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's not what I said.

**Ms Churley:** My last question to you in this minute—

**Hon Mr Newman:** All I simply said was that under their watch—



**The Chair:** Minister, I really ask your indulgence here.

**Ms Churley:** I didn't ask you a question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —the NDP had cut the money within the—

**The Chair:** Minister, I don't want to cite you for not being co-operative. Perhaps you don't understand that I would like to extend the same courtesy to the person asking the question as I'm trying to have them extend to you, and I can't do that if you don't co-operate.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, that wasn't a question. I went to the clean air summit today. In your statement you talked about the ministry continuing to take a balanced approach to environmental protection. What did you mean by "a balanced approach"?

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I said was the approach that the ministry was taking was to ensure that air quality is indeed protected.

1650

**Ms Churley:** You said "balanced." I've got your statement right here. I want to know what you meant by "balanced."

**Hon Mr Newman:** You may want to check the audio.

**Ms Churley:** I notice you took it out because I did you a favour today. I told Hal Vincent and your other assistant that it was a really dumb thing to put "balanced" in that statement today. It's written in your statement. I actually helped him out today, Mr Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Churley. The government caucuses.

**Mr Barrett:** To follow up on Ms Churley's question concerning the smog-busting summit sponsored by the city of Toronto, I don't know, Minister, whether in previous questions this afternoon on smog and air quality you had time to give a complete answer. I know you were also questioned in the House today with respect to this. I wonder if you could expand a bit, something beyond perhaps the 60 seconds allowed, with respect to air quality and smog or anything further that you could let us know on the city of Toronto smog-busting summit.

I might mention, too, I have a second question—again this has been raised by Mr Bradley—with respect to coal-fired generating stations. I have Nanticoke in my riding. I just wonder if you could wrap up on the comments on air quality and smog.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Indeed the smog summit today was a good event organized by the city of Toronto, the Toronto Environmental Alliance and the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. I was at this very worthwhile event, as was the federal Minister of the Environment, as well as the federal minister for the GTA and others. The issue of smog was indeed discussed and I can tell you today that the government is committed to reducing smog-causing pollutants and protecting the air that we all breathe in this province.

Our anti-smog action plan includes long-range commitments to reduce smog-causing emissions. The first is a 25% reduction of NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs from the 1990 base levels by 2005, and an accelerated reduction of 45% by

2010. I can also tell you that on Tuesday, June 6, at the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment meeting in Quebec, we accelerated our second commitment to set a target of 45% by 2010.

We were also very successful in lobbying the federal government to agree to obtain commitments from the United States for increasing action in smog reduction. This will dramatically increase the effectiveness of our programs. As much as 90% of the smog in certain parts of Ontario originates from the United States. Since 1996, our air quality index readings have been good to very good in that category some 95% of the time. This percentage has been steadily increasing since 1995. But I can assure you that there's always more that can be done and we will ensure that more is done.

On April 26 of this year I announced the implementation of Ontario's enhanced smog alert and air quality reporting program. The program, which began on May 1, provides Ontarians with improved reporting through comprehensive and timely air quality readings. These can be obtained through our new Web site at [airqualityontario.com](http://airqualityontario.com)—that's all one word—and I would encourage everyone here to go on to that Web site. I know that in the first eight weeks or so we had over 370,000 hits to that Web site, so indeed the people of Ontario are making very good use of this very productive Web site.

We were also awarded intervener status in the United States Environmental Protection Agency lawsuit to ensure that the United States does its part to clean up 50% of our smog problem which comes from across the border. We've also updated 130 air quality standards, many of which were 20 years old. To think that those 130 air standards had been updated is only good news for the people of Ontario.

As I mentioned, we implemented the Drive Clean program to tackle the problem of automotive pollution, including smog. A brief review of those initiatives included mandatory testing of cars that began in the GTA and Hamilton-Wentworth area on April 1, 1999. The trucks and buses testing program was launched September 30, 1999 and I can tell you that testing will begin in the phase 2 areas for light-duty vehicles and heavy-duty non-diesel vehicles on January 1, 2000.

We launched the smog patrol, which is the roadside testing system to stop grossly polluting vehicles, including those from out of province and out of country. Since April 1, we've inspected over 2,000 vehicles and we've issued more than 270 tickets. So it's basically "Repair the car or get it off the road." That's the tough stance that we take.

The on-road enforcement of Drive Clean became even stronger on November 9, 1999, with the addition of new smog patrol staff who are patrolling our highways and pulling over those grossly emitting vehicles.

We also had a significant initiative, the Partners in Air program. That complements the smog plan and the Drive Clean program by promoting awareness in how each person can make a difference. It's something that is done

in our high schools, and I believe there are 14 high schools across Ontario that are participating in this program. It truly makes learning fun when our young people can monitor the air in that respect.

Pollutant emissions from the incinerator sector are being addressed in part through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Under this national process, for which Ontario is the champion, emission standards are being set for dioxins and mercury.

There are potential health impacts associated with poor air quality, and that's something that is important to this government. The use of air quality advisories is one of the tools used to keep the public informed. We have prepared a smog alert and municipal response guide that has been sent to each and every one of the municipalities in Ontario to encourage them to do their part to reduce smog.

There's the memorandum of understanding that's been developed in several industrial subsectors. That includes provisions for the development and implementation of pollution prevention plans into our codes of management practice, improved operating procedures and the use of best management practices. It is a major concern that 50% of the ground-level ozone comes from the United States during our bad air days. We are working with the environmental authorities from 11 US states to encourage action on air issues because, as you know, pollution and smog know no boundaries and no jurisdiction.

Ontario has introduced a—

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Chair: Is it within our standing order rules of the House that it's permissible for a parliamentary assistant to question his own minister on the estimates of that department before this committee?

**The Chair:** Sorry, I don't think that's a point of order, Mr Gerretsen, and in direct response, I don't believe there are any applicable standing orders. I'd ask the minister to continue.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** Mr Barrett is the parliamentary assistant, as a point of information.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I haven't lost any time there, have I?

**The Chair:** No.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that.

Just let me collect my thoughts for a moment and continue with what I was about to say, the fact that it is a major concern that 50% of the ground-level ozone comes from the United States during bad air days. I don't think anyone disputes that fact, and we're working with environmental authorities from 11 US states to encourage joint action on air issues. This is a very important issue.

Our province has introduced an interim standard for particulate matter: PM10. As you would be well aware, that is a key component of smog which will guide Ontario's air quality program decisions until the Canada-

wide PM standards are developed. So we're out there at the forefront.

We've also published a compendium document on the fine particulate matter issues in Ontario and a particulate matter strategy option document. Both reports have been reviewed by an expert panel and will be used as resources for development of Ontario's fine particulate matter strategy.

The government has implemented a regulation requiring less polluting gasoline formulas during the summer months. That may be of interest to some members here. It's expected to reduce emissions of smog-causing volatile organic compounds by some 19,000 tonnes a year. What we must all recognize is that each one of us contributes to air pollution—every one of us in this room. Every time we drive, every time we use the gas lawn mower, every time we paint our home, we contribute to smog, and we must all do our part to solve the problem.

Perhaps Ed Piché may be able to expand a little bit more—oh, sorry. The second part of your question, if I recall, was coal-fired plants.

**1700**

**Mr Barrett:** In fact, on the Partners in Air, I know there's at least one high school in Scarborough that has a Partners in Air program. I might mention on behalf of my own riding—and I don't think I'm speaking as parliamentary assistant—that there are two high schools—Burford high school and Valley Heights Secondary School—in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant that are very interested in this Partners in Air program. Part of this is driven by the fact that, as you mentioned, 50% of our ground-level ozone comes across the border, from across Lake Erie in our case, and there's a very heightened awareness of this problem in my area. You would know this through the work of the Long Point Foundation on Lake Erie. Of course, we contribute as well through the coal-fired station in Nanticoke.

If there's time permitting, Chair, I would like to raise the issue of the status of the coal-fired plants. I know last month you, as minister, declared a moratorium on the sale of coal-fired generating stations.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I just want to make reference back to the Partners in Air program. Yes, there is a school in my riding, Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute, that's involved in the program and has been for a number of years. I know staff and students really enjoy that program. So it's good to see we have it across the province.

With respect to the coal-fired generation facilities within the province, the government is committed to ensuring that strong environmental protection measures are in place as it moves forward in the competitive electricity system. Our commitment to the environment has been a mainstay throughout the restructuring initiative. We have backed this commitment up with unprecedented actions, targeting smog, acid rain and climate change. Strict emissions limits, mandatory monitoring and reporting, and emissions performance standards are among a list of initiatives that will improve



our air quality and protect the health of our families in the province.

As Minister of the Environment, I am very concerned about the health and environmental impacts of coal-fired generation facilities. It's my job to ensure that environmental concerns are at the forefront of any decisions regarding the potential sale of these facilities.

The review that's underway, and it's a very important review, builds on the strong framework of measures already introduced by extending and applying environmental vigilance to the assessment of individual facilities. The review will look at options for establishing environmental safeguards prior to the sale of coal-fired stations. The key elements of the review will include options for maximizing environmental performance, individual plant emissions and impacts to local and regional air quality—that's a very key issue—the timing of improvements, as well as the age and efficiency of the plants.

Our actions prove our commitment to the protection of the environment. Unlike previous governments who had the chance to do this years ago—and they all had it, I want to say to the members—once again, it's up to this government to do the responsible thing to protect Ontario's environment.

I'll now turn it over to Tony Rockingham.

**Mr Tony Rockingham:** My name is Tony Rockingham. I'm the director of the air policy and climate change branch in the integrated environmental planning division of the ministry.

Just to perhaps extend on a few points the minister raised, we are taking a look at all of the coal-fired stations in Ontario. We will be looking at the age of the stations, the technologies that are in use, the plans that are in place, so additional pollution control technologies may already be planned.

We are looking at the use of the stations and how that has changed over time: whether there is increased electricity production from these stations or whether indeed the use of the stations is declining.

We are also very conscious of alternative technologies that have been developed for pollution control. We will be reviewing the technologies that exist in the market now, the technologies that are being developed and are perhaps being used on a pilot basis in other countries.

We are looking at a comparison of the stations with similar stations around the world to establish what is best practice and what pollution control technologies are practical in different situations.

We are also looking at the environmental controls that have been applied elsewhere in competitive electricity systems. In particular we're looking at details that were proposed in the emissions credit trading system that was proposed by the government on January 24 to ensure, when we finalize details of that credit trading system, that we are cognizant of the level of environmental protection it affords the people of Ontario for the coal-fired stations.

In that regard, we're building on the experience that we've had in what's referred to as the PERT program, that's the pilot emissions reductions trading system. This is a system that was started several years ago by a group of industries that were interested in learning more about one of the leading edge areas for environmental control. As I say, PERT is an industry-led initiative, but we have been participating enthusiastically on that initiative for several years now. It's a method for us to bring together and learn from the experts in Canada and across North America on how pollution reduction trading can be used to ensure that strict environmental standards are met.

The participants in Ontario include the Ontario steelmakers—both Dofasco and Stelco are participating in that; the natural gas companies, Union Gas and Consumers' Gas, or Enbridge, as it's now called; Ontario Power Generation; John Deere; Shell Chemicals; Dupont Canada.

We also have environmental groups that are participating in the program because we believe they recognize the importance of emissions trading and how it can provide a real benefit to the environment, especially in a competitive electricity system. Pollution Probe is a member of the pilot project, the asthma society, a Montreal-based environmental organization called STOP, Environment Canada and Industry Canada.

We are using the experience in the PERT program to learn about emissions trading and to shape our regulations, which will have a major influence and impact on the pollution control at coal-fired stations and to encourage investments in pollution control at coal-fired stations or, indeed, to encourage companies to take the assets at coal-fired stations and convert fuels, change fuels, so that perhaps those coal-fired stations could run on natural gas.

The results so far of the demonstration project: We've seen trades that have occurred where emission reductions have been undertaken by companies that go well beyond the regulated limits. As an incentive for that, they are allowed to create credits which can be sold on the market. The experience to date is that, indeed, by offering credits, by creating a market for emission credits, companies have the incentive to go well beyond what the regulations require.

Through the PERT program, we're aware of emissions trading systems that are actually up and running in the US northeast and have been instrumental in reducing smog. We're also aware of emissions trading that has taken place in California and, again, has been credited with reducing smog-causing precursors.

In Ontario, we've seen trade such as the scrapping of high-emission vehicles earlier than they would otherwise have been, so that activity gets those vehicles off the road. We've seen a company called Environmental Interface Ltd. create credits through NO<sub>x</sub> reductions from energy-saving retrofits of schools and hospitals. Again, they are going well beyond what regulations require.

We've seen credits created actually at coal-fired stations outside the jurisdiction. We've seen 400 tonnes



of NO<sub>x</sub> credits purchased by Ontario Hydro from Detroit Edison, and that's the Monroe plant near Detroit. That could be very important in reducing smog-causing emissions that would otherwise cross the border into Ontario, causing smog. The NO<sub>x</sub> credits have also been created by Ontario Hydro through the installation, prior to the requirement by regulation, of low-NO<sub>x</sub> burners on their coal-fired stations.

In fact, we've been very pleased to see credits that have been sold across international boundaries the other way; that is, that Connecticut has actually purchased credits from Ontario because they are of the view that by encouraging emission reductions upstream, they are helping their smog situation in Connecticut.

That program has been very important to us in learning about emissions trading, and looking at the systems approach is part of what we are doing on the coal review. I also touch on the fact that the coal review is being done in the context, as the minister said, of a number of initiatives that are already underway, such as the mandatory reporting and monitoring regulation which is already in place for the electricity sector, and will allow us and the public to have, for the first time, much better information on some 28 substances of concern from those stations.

1710

**Mr Barrett:** I really appreciate this explanation of the emissions reduction trading program. It's very hard for me to explain this to constituents. Last month, there was the requirement for emissions reporting, not only in the electrical sector, but down the road, industry in general. Just a quick thumbnail sketch on how that works?

**Mr Rockingham:** Yes, indeed, there was a proposal made on January 24 for the monitoring and reporting in the electricity sector first, but to extend to all major emitting sources. The target date for that is January 1, 2001, and we are working with stakeholders to develop a list of substances of concern. It will be a much more extensive list than for the electricity sector and it will include sectors such as petroleum refineries, automotive makers, in fact, all major emission sources.

**Mr Bradley:** I have some very straightforward questions, which I know will elicit very straightforward answers from the minister. Since the town of Walkerton had E coli of the most virulent kind in its water and it was through all the system and they have to go home to home to flush it out and get rid of it, what are you doing with the sludge from Walkerton, not only from the sewage treatment plant, but from the septic tanks around there, since the sludge, presumably, will have E coli of the most virulent kind in it? You're not spreading that on fields, are you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Absolutely not. In fact, OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency—

**Mr Bradley:** The one you're going to sell, OK. Go ahead, sorry. I shouldn't interrupt you. I apologize.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I've been interrupted here, I can't—

**Mr Bradley:** My sincere apology.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I accept that, because I know that you truly mean that.

All I was saying was that OCWA is looking after that. They are ensuring that the system is entirely clean, and that would include the material to which you referred. I can assure you that they'll take all measures possible to ensure that it is environmentally disposed of appropriately.

**Mr Bradley:** Where is that sludge now? I presume that if you don't know, your waste management people will know. Where is that sludge at this moment, and second, what are you going to do with that sludge specifically? Maybe you've got it contained somewhere right now and it's piling up. If it is—

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's still within the container system.

**Mr Bradley:** It's in a container system. You're telling us that. I accept that. What are you going to do with it once it leaves the container system? Whatever are you going to do with that sludge then?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You're talking sewage system now?

**Mr Bradley:** I'm talking about both the sewage system and—because you would know there would also be people on septic tanks—septic as well.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I just wanted to ensure specifically what your question was. I would want to answer it to the best of my ability, to confirm that you're talking about water and you're talking about sewer. You're talking about the two systems?

**Mr Bradley:** You'll fill me in on this if I'm not certain of this: Don't some people who have a septic tank system have water as well that they get that—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm sorry. I was listening to your question. I didn't quite know specifically what you were saying, but I can tell you anything to do with Walkerton, whether it's the swabbing of the water system or sludge from the sewer system, I can tell you that OCWA will be looking at that issue and disposing of it in an environmentally appropriate manner.

**Mr Bradley:** That doesn't give me an answer. "Appropriate manner" doesn't tell me specifically what they're going to do with it. I know it's a challenge for you. I want to be fair to you. I know it's a challenge. That's why I'm wondering what on earth you're going to do to it to make it acceptable to dispose of somehow or other. Maybe some of your staff could help us out.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I was just going to ask Carl Griffith if he would answer that question, because I don't believe at this point it has been disposed of. I'll have Carl answer that for you.

**Mr Carl Griffith:** There are several options available. One is incineration; another is landfilling. Obviously the material that is in storage right now would have to, if it was going to be used or dealt with in any manner, meet whatever the environmental standards were in place for that particular use. All those options are available to us right now.

**Mr Bradley:** Can you help me out with this? I understand that if you have a sewage treatment system and you get the sludge from there you can keep it somewhere. What's happening with septic tanks? People who are on septic water, they still get water from a well, but they have septic tanks and there's a hauler, presumably, who would haul that stuff somewhere once it fills up. Where would that go and how would it be treated in Walkerton's case with E coli?

**Mr Griffith:** I can respond to that. In general, again, it would have to be dealt with in an environmentally acceptable manner, whether it was taken to some form of landfill storage or incineration; or if it passed our environmental requirements, it may be spread.

**Mr Bradley:** I'll remain worried about that and move on to another question, not so much about the town itself—I'm worried about the septic ones—but I'll ask the minister a question in the House, maybe tomorrow or next week when we're back in session.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I would not want to see that spread and I will tell you we'll do everything we can to ensure that it's not spread.

**Mr Bradley:** OK, thanks very much.

Are you prepared to table the 1998 and 1999 drinking water surveillance program results? It used to be that those results were provided to the people of Ontario every year. It was a very good package. Our Ministry of the Environment in Ontario did a very good job of that. They provided that information to folks every year in a nice booklet you could get and go through, and the media could easily go through it. Would you be able to table that for this committee in the near future?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sure, once the report's compiled and completed, I'd be pleased to table it with this committee.

**Mr Bradley:** Does that mean that the 1998 report, from two years ago, is not done yet?

**Hon Mr Newman:** As you would know, it takes time.

**Mr Bradley:** I understand.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Reports do come in. I always go back to the CEC report that people want to quote from, from 1997; people seem to believe that's OK to quote from. The ministry has the 1997 drinking water surveillance program report listed on the Web site and available. Information past that date obviously has to be analyzed and put in the form of a report. The ministry would need to do work with that. As soon as the report is completed, I'll make sure that everyone gets a copy.

**Mr Bradley:** Is the reason we don't have a report from 1998 and 1999—we're now into June of the year 2000—is that you don't have the staff to do it? I can't believe that you simply want to hide the results; I'm not that cynical to think that. Is the real reason that you simply don't have the staff to do it and that's why we don't have a report for 1998 and 1999?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Not at all. In fact, as you know, it takes time to get that information together, to analyze it, to go through all the different facilities in the drinking water surveillance program. You know the number has

increased every year. I can tell you that obviously a report is compiled, and once the report is ready, I'll make sure everyone gets a copy.

**Mr Bradley:** I mentioned inspections from this secret document that got leaked today, that you haven't seen, that originated presumably in your ministry. It's always interesting that you haven't seen it, but there it is, I have to accept what you say.

I'll tell you why I want to get to it so I'll give you some time to think about it, which is fair enough. As you know from my questions in the House, I'm worried that you don't have the staff to do the thorough inspection of all those water treatment plants in Ontario by the end of the year, as you say you're going to. I'm worried about that aspect of it and that if you do it you're going to haul them from somewhere else; in other words, you're going to abandon sewage treatment plant inspections or you're going to have to take the staff from somewhere else where they're doing things they should be doing now.

**1720**

I'm worried because this document talks about that. It says: "Existing MOE inspectors and investigators are fully committed to their current work plan activities. Through these activities (inspect/assess, respond) approximately 10% of current known sources of pollution are inspected annually." That's only 10%. "Taking staff away from these activities would result in slippages which would negate the positive impact of the new program. Therefore new staffing will be required for this new program."

When we asked in the House if you were hiring new people, and I think on a permanent basis for this, the Premier said: "No, why would you need those? It's just a bulge." So I'm asking where you're getting the staff, specifically, how many staff you are getting and what specific qualifications would they have? I know not everybody could do that; I couldn't begin to do that. I don't know if your air inspection people, even as smart as they are—they're much smarter than I am—they couldn't even do that if they went to a plant. I'll leave it open to you now to answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I won't comment on that, but I will assure you that you need not worry.

**Mr Bradley:** I am worried.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I know that's a concern and I want to reassure you that each and every one of the 630 facilities in this province is going to be inspected by the end of this year. Every one of them is going to be inspected by a qualified person, by qualified personnel.

**Mr Bradley:** Sorry, would you mind me interrupting for a second just to ask what is qualified, if you can help me out there?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm simply trying to make a point, that you needn't worry, that each of the 630 facilities is going to be inspected. We're going to ensure that's done by the end of this year, by the end of this calendar year, by the end of the year 2000.

**Mr Bradley:** I call that mission impossible, but that's OK.



**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, to you it may be impossible, but to me it is a very possible mission—

**Mr Bradley:** Sorry, I apologize.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —and it's something that's going to be done. I can tell you that we at the Ministry of the Environment take this very seriously. This is a goal and an objective that I've set as minister. I hope that when it's all done you will be up there applauding, saying, "Minister, yes, you did see that every site was inspected and I commend you for that."

Each of them is going to be inspected by the end of the year. We're going to go beyond that; we're going to ensure that every certificate of approval within the province of Ontario for water facilities is reviewed. We're going to see that when it's done each water facility only has one certificate of approval, rather than some having a series. There will be a single certificate of approval for each facility. Beyond that, we're going to ensure that certificates of approval are reviewed every three years after that. This is a very proactive and positive step that I'm taking as minister, that the ministry is taking and that the government is taking to ensure, again, that each of the 630 facilities is inspected by a qualified person.

**Mr Bradley:** I've talked to people who have inspected plants and they tell me it's quite a process. You and I might go in and just have a look around; we don't know what to look for. These people know what to look for and they tell me that process takes at least a week, maybe longer, to do a thorough job. That's all the paperwork, assessing the systems and so on. Could you help me out by describing the components and the process of a plant inspection? How does a plant inspection actually take place and how long would it take to do it and what has to be done? Maybe one of your officials would be happy to help you out.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Just before I do turn it over to a ministry official, Bob Shaw, I want to again reiterate that the inspections are done by experienced senior environmental officers and engineers. Yes, it is a complex procedure to inspect those facilities, but again, be assured, each of the 630 facilities will be inspected. Now I'll now call on Bob Shaw.

**Mr Bradley:** Just as you do the hand-off to Mr Shaw, are you taking them from other places in the ministry, and if they take them from other places in the ministry, what happens to the jobs those people are supposed to be doing?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, let me answer your question with respect to the inspection of the water plants. I'm going to have Bob Shaw answer that. Hopefully, we'll have some time to answer the other question.

**Mr Bob Shaw:** I'm the regional director of central region with the environment.

The purpose of the ministry's inspection is to focus on whether or not the water treatment facility is operating in compliance. In terms of operating within compliance, the first thing we're looking for is whether or not it's in compliance with its certificates of approval.

You can divide the inspection into three pieces. As you've alluded to, Mr Bradley, you have to look at the certificates of approval, and that is normally done before the inspector leaves the office and goes out into the field. There is a second piece, which is the actual visit to the plant, its physical inspection, and then there's a third piece, which is when the inspector writes up their report on the facility.

As I said, the inspection is focusing on compliance so it's compliance with the certificate of approval, in particular if there were any specific conditions in the certificate of approval as it may apply to additional sampling that is required at that facility.

The second compliance piece is whether or not the facility is operating in compliance with its permits to take water. Quite often, on water supply systems which are operating off groundwater, there are conditions imposed with regard to maximum takings etc to avoid interference with other uses of the groundwater.

The inspection also examines whether or not the facility is operating in compliance with any orders which may have been issued on the facility. This could be a director's order or a field order. At the time of inspection, it is also determined whether or not the facility is being operated by the appropriately licensed personnel. At the time of inspection we also look at the level of treatment which is provided at the facility and whether or not there have been any exceedences in terms of the testing that has been done at the facility with regard to any of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. Those are the main components of the inspection that takes place at the actual facility.

**Mr Bradley:** Thanks very much. I really appreciate that. It gives us a good background on that.

As soon as I get the answer from Mr Newman on where he's going to get these people from other places in the ministry and what jobs they're going to abandon when they do it, I'll go to Mrs Dombrowsky.

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, there are different levels of complexity within the Ministry of the Environment and I'm sure you would be aware of that. We are assigning environmental officers based on experience so they can competently handle the area they are put in.

With respect to water facilities, we've set up teams. We've set them up to include qualified, experienced environmental officers and these environmental officers work within a team. The terms of reference are conveyed to the team and how it should be done.

**Mr Bradley:** Where did you get those people?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying to answer the question.

**Mr Bradley:** You're not taking Mr Piché and making him inspect plants now, I hope.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll tell you something. We are going to make sure that every one of those 630 facilities is inspected this year. The point I was trying to make is that the terms of reference are conveyed to the team, and how it will be done. They're doing that. These teams also have access to the scientific and engineering capabilities, should more complex issues arise. Those scientific and



engineering capabilities within the ministry are made available to the teams as they're inspecting the sites. Again, I just want to tell you, 630 sites will be inspected by the end of this year.

**Mr Bradley:** Mark me down as worried that you're taking them from somewhere else, and let me go to Mrs Dombrowsky.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Carl is going to finish up.

**Mr Bradley:** No, I have no more concerns, honestly. I have no more concerns at all and now we'll go to Mrs Dombrowsky.

**Interjection:** He still didn't answer the question as to where he's getting them.

**The Chair:** Mrs Dombrowsky, please.

**Mr Bradley:** I am satisfied with the answer, honest. I'm totally satisfied.

**The Chair:** Minister, if you wish to spend more time in this committee we welcome your presence, but you're only adding to the time. Mrs Dombrowsky.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** If I could just inquire, how much time is remaining?

**The Chair:** There is approximately five minutes left.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Minister, the Deloro mine site is located in my riding and you are probably aware that this site is recognized as one of the worst environmental hazards in Ontario. The site is located on the Moira River and it is contaminated with many substances, including arsenic and radioactive soil and waste.

Your ministry has promised to remediate the site to secure these contaminants, these substances. Currently, arsenic levels in the water leaving the site are still not meeting the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. Your ministry has committed \$18 million for site cleanup.

My question and the question that my constituents have is, if this figure of \$18 million is not sufficient, if after you've spent that \$18 million the water leaving that site is still not meeting the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives, is the ministry prepared to commit the necessary resources to ensure the safety of my constituents who live in that area and downstream, along the watershed of the Moira River?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Is that your question?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** That's my question.

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**Hon Mr Newman:** Let me assure you that we place a high priority on this issue and the health and safety of the people living in the communities near the abandoned Deloro mine site. To date the government has spent over \$14 million on the mine site rehabilitation and yes, we do expect to spend an additional \$18 million on the final cleanup of the abandoned site. This is more than any government has spent on this site until now, so it is a very important measure.

With respect to a situation after that money has been spent, let's see what happens. We've committed the \$18 million. That money will be spent. Obviously, I want to see that site fully remediated.

**Mr Curling:** You'll get some more money, then.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry, Chair?

**The Chair:** I said nothing, Mr Newman.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm sorry, I thought someone had a question over there. This is a very important question.

I personally would want to see that once that money is spent we'll assess the situation at that point, but we want to see that cleaned up.

As you will probably be aware, we released a comprehensive study in July of last year which concluded that the community is safe. The cleanup of this site has been a very long and arduous process, but I think you would agree that we have made some progress.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** The staff have really been exceptional.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It costs money. We've treated the groundwater; we've demolished the unsafe buildings; we've located and sealed the mine shafts. These are important measures that needed to be taken.

You would know that on the Moira River loadings of arsenic have been reduced by more than 80%, so that proves that the remediation efforts of the ministry are taking place. But the job isn't finished. The work continues. There is more work that needs to be done and as Minister of the Environment I am committed to ensuring that job is finished.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You are probably aware that Canada Waste Services currently has a proposal with the Ministry of the Environment to expand the Richmond landfill site, which is located in my riding, and this would become a superdump in Ontario.

I think it's very important for the minister to understand that this site is situated on fractured limestone, not an ideal base for such a site. The region is the home of the loggerhead shrike, which is a bird on the provincial endangered species list. Many area residents, including myself, do not believe that the expansion is in the best interests of our region.

The Premier has indicated that no Ontario community would be forced to take the waste of another community against their will. Will you give your assurance to me today that this is still the case?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I have Michael Williams here who can answer that very technical question with respect to that dump.

**Mr Michael Williams:** I'm the director of the environmental assessment and approvals branch of the operations division of the ministry.

With respect to the particular application that's before the ministry by Canadian Waste Services, I can assure the Chair and the members here that our staff will be looking at all aspects, including the technical aspects: groundwater, endangered species, flows, bedrock, the base. All of those things will be considered by our engineering and our technical experts. They will be fully evaluated and a recommendation will be made on the particular disposition of that application in due course.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Just for clarification, though, Minister, your Premier has stated publicly that no community would be forced to take waste from outside

their community. I'm asking you to give me that assurance in this particular case as well.

**The Chair:** Minister, if I could ask you to answer briefly; you have about 20 seconds.

**Hon Mr Newman:** If the Premier said that, then you have to take the Premier at his word.

**The Chair:** We now turn to Ms Churley for the third party.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, can I ask you who the deputy was in March 2000 at the Ministry of the Environment? Who was the deputy minister at that time?

**Hon Mr Newman:** This deputy here.

**Ms Churley:** Sorry, I couldn't hear you.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I said the person who is sitting to my right, Mr Stien Lal, is the deputy.

**Ms Churley:** Thank you. Then he would know the history of this document before us today, would he not, if he was the deputy at that time?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I believe I've answered that question.

**Ms Churley:** Will you not answer that question? Would the deputy know the history of the cabinet—

**Hon Mr Newman:** I believe I've answered that question previously here today.

**Ms Churley:** Can I ask you again? I'd like to understand what happened with this document, if you would allow your deputy to tell the committee what happened with this document.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I've answered that question today.

**Ms Churley:** So when it's convenient for you to put a staff on, you do it, and when it's not, you won't. I think it's a very clear question—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Those are your words.

**Ms Churley:** —that I'm asking you, Minister. Can we expect you to ask him for a briefing on it, since it appears from your previous answers that you haven't yet?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered that already today.

**Ms Churley:** I want to ask you a question, Minister. On several occasions, before Walkerton and after Walkerton, both you and your Premier—but since he's not here, I'll speak specifically about you—told the House and the public that the Ministry of the Environment cuts had no impact on the delivery of service. You've got a cabinet submission and many other documents telling you otherwise today. Do you still stand by that statement?

**Hon Mr Newman:** As you would be aware, we did make a campaign commitment in the 1999 campaign to have an environmental SWAT team in place to audit industries to ensure that they are indeed obeying the rules of this province with respect to the environment. Again I draw you to the fact that in 1999-2000, 7,055 investigations were done by the operations branch of the ministry. In 1994-95 there were 7,010. That is an increase over that time frame for those investigations that have taken place.

With respect to some of your question, please keep in mind that there is the review underway with Valerie

Gibbons, reviewing the procedures and practices of the ministry. There are the four investigations underway; the public inquiry, as you know, is underway.

**Ms Churley:** I am satisfied with the answer, Chair.

**Hon Mr Newman:** But the bottom line is that we all want answers to get to the bottom of what's happened.

**Ms Churley:** You haven't answered my question specifically right now. What we're trying to do is avoid other Walkertons from happening and other disasters from happening. Would you still—

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's why there are the four investigations underway to get to the bottom of it.

**Ms Churley:** So you're going to wait until those investigations are over?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No. That's why we have the review underway. The review is separate from those four investigations. We're going to look at everything within the ministry; everything is on the table. We want to ensure that we have the best possible Ministry of the Environment that we can possibly have for the people of Ontario, for the environment of Ontario, so that it's a ministry that is ready and able to protect the people and the environment in the 21st century in this province.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, you're saying there are four investigations underway and you now have a consultant in to help you.

I have a question. This is a question—

**Hon Mr Newman:** What I said was there are the four investigations underway, and you know that, but there is also the review underway—

**Ms Churley:** That's what I'm saying. You're telling me—

**Hon Mr Newman:** —with Valerie Gibbons and it's there to make recommendations to me as minister.

**Ms Churley:** I am asking the minister a question and he's not waiting for the question.

**The Chair:** Order.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm just trying to answer the question.

**Ms Churley:** I did not ask you a question yet.

**The Chair:** Minister. Ms Churley, please address your remarks through the Chair.

**Ms Churley:** I did not ask him a question yet.

**The Chair:** All right.

**Ms Churley:** Let me rephrase that. There are four investigations underway. You have in front of you now this cabinet document. There have been numerous other reports inside and outside the ministry saying that things had to change within your ministry or disasters could happen. You already have one proposal that was apparently thrown out that gave you a suggestion as to what needs to be done right away. What are you going to do immediately, right away, with the clear evidence in front of you that the ministry is understaffed and under-resourced, to avoid another Walkerton and more deaths as a result of the lack of resources to protect our health and our environment? That is my question, your immediate response to all of the compelling evidence that there is a problem in your ministry.



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**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, you did mention the four investigations. There is the public inquiry. There is the Ontario Provincial Police investigation—

**Ms Churley:** Oh, my God.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, you yourself raised the issue.

**Ms Churley:** I know about all of the inquiries. We called for an inquiry.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, come to order.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm shocked.

**Ms Churley:** Mr Chair, I don't want him repeating a litany of the names of all of the investigations that we all know about to stall for time.

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, I will ensure the minister does not waste time, but I can't hear his answer if you interject immediately upon his answering. There may be a relevancy to what the minister is saying. I can't determine that if you're going to interject, and I'm going to ask you to come to order.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Mr Chair, simply, the member indicated there were four investigations, and for all the members present I wanted to elaborate on what those four investigations are. There is the public inquiry that's underway with Mr Justice O'Connor. There is the—

**The Chair:** Minister, I wonder if I might interject and ask if you could address the question as directly as you can. I appreciate there are—

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, Chair—

**The Chair:** I'm not going to judge your answer, Mr Minister. I would ask you to have regard for that because we're on our last number of minutes here for this inquiry.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I don't ask people to ask their questions in any way and I don't expect to be told how to answer them.

**Ms Churley:** Mr Chair, on a point of order: To clarify, perhaps he misunderstood my question. I asked not about the inquiries. I asked about what he's going to do immediately.

**The Chair:** Yes, I understand, Ms Churley, but your question was a lengthy question and the minister is within his rights to answer. I've given him the opportunity and the goodwill to be direct in his answer. I'm sure the minister will take the committee up on that invitation and I will now permit him to answer, please.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I would just indicate for all the members present that, the member had referred to the four investigations and I wanted everyone to know that the first one is the public inquiry that is underway. There is the Ontario Provincial Police investigation that's underway. That would be the second investigation. The third investigation would be the coroner's inquest that's underway, looking at the deaths in Walkerton. There's also the fourth investigation, which is the Ministry of the Environment's investigation through the investigations and enforcement branch.

The member asked what we are doing. On top of those reviews, those four investigations, which are going to get to the bottom of what happened in Walkerton, we're

going to look at all items. Everything is on the table. What those four investigations are going to do is to provide answers. Obviously I'm anxious to get to the bottom of it. We all want answers.

But in addition to those four investigations, there is also the review of the Ministry of the Environment underway. Everything in the ministry is on the table, all procedures, all operations. We want to ensure this is dealt with. The Premier himself has also stated that whatever is needed will be brought forward.

**Ms Churley:** What I was saying, Minister, is that I have no problem with the review.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry? You have a problem with the review?

**Ms Churley:** What I'm saying is that the resources need to be put back now and I was hoping you would say that that would be done immediately.

Can I ask if you're going to release the drinking water test results for all municipalities in Ontario immediately, which I've been repeatedly asking for for the past three weeks—all of the drinking water tests immediately?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I would encourage you to wait for the review to take its course.

**Ms Churley:** Oh, no, I can't stand it.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Listen, you mentioned the review in your question. You said you can't wait for the review. The review has to take its time, has to take its course. Valerie Gibbons has to make her recommendation, has to look at the ministry, has to talk with people, to assess what recommendations would be coming forward. You were the one who raised the issue of the review, not me.

But with respect to the drinking water surveillance program report, I can tell you there is the 1997 report that is available for people on the Web site. The next report, for 1998, that information's all being compiled from all of the municipalities involved. There's analysis that needs to be done by the ministry because to have raw data without any analysis really doesn't help the case at all. We're going to ensure that is put into a report, just as it was in 1997, and ensure it is available to people. I think there will be a lot of interest in this because it is a very important matter.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, will you tell the public which water treatment plants have outstanding orders against them from the Ministry of the Environment?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think what's important is the fact there are these 630 inspections that are going to take place this year. Each and every one of the water facilities in the province is going to be inspected. We're going to know the status of every one of those 630 facilities this year. Any facility that is not in compliance I can assure the member will be brought into compliance. There will be field orders issued for those that aren't. I'm going to ensure that each and every one of those facilities is not only inspected, that the certificate of approval is inspected for that facility, but that in the end there is a single certificate of approval for each and every water facility in this province. After that, those certificates of approval will be reviewed every three years.



**Ms Churley:** Are you going to hire more staff to make sure that all of this happens?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Again, I'm not sure if you were here when I answered the question from the member from St Catharines, but obviously you have my commitment that every one of those facilities is going to be inspected by qualified personnel from the ministry just to see that it is done at every one of those 630 facilities, that teams are set up of qualified, experienced environmental officers who are going to see that is all done within the province.

**Ms Churley:** Why won't you support the Safe Drinking Water Act, which I introduced in the House for first reading last week, which has been supported by environmental groups across the province that have worked extensively around water issues and have said that the regulations you're bringing in would not in fact prevent a Walkerton even if they were in place? Why won't you therefore, when experts are saying that already, support this Safe Drinking Water Act?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm glad you raised the issue, because I think it's important for everyone here to understand that in 1989, when your party was not part of the government, one of your private members, Ruth Grier, brought forward a safe drinking water act. It died in 1990. That private member subsequently became the Minister of the Environment, and you had five years and did nothing.

**Ms Churley:** I wish we had. But I guess what we're talking about now is that 18 people have died, and 18 people hadn't died from drinking water before this year. We're in a critical situation. The other thing, as you know, Minister, is that our government did create the Ontario Clean Water Agency, and you previously said our government took \$200 million out of the Ministry of the Environment which, as you know, wasn't correct. You admitted later that the \$200 million went into the—

**Hon Mr Newman:** It was in reference to a journal that had been printed where the writer quoted the ministry's being cut by \$200 million.

**Ms Churley:** The \$200 million went into the clean water agency. We also, under the municipal assistance program and Jobs Ontario money, brought in programs. It was, in fact, because that money was going into sewer and water projects and conservation plans were attached to that. So you'll be well aware that our government had started the whole process, a very difficult process, knowing that the infrastructure of sewer and water plants are in trouble.

We are now talking about the year 2000. You're the minister. You have a bill before you that should be passed to protect the drinking water in Ontario so that what happened in Walkerton won't happen again. Will you support that bill?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I have a regulation that's coming forward to protect the drinking water in this province. I want to assure you that this will be the toughest drinking water regulation in all of North America. You have my assurance of that. I announced on May 29 that I had

instructed ministry staff to begin drafting a regulation with respect to that that would review all of the certificates of approval this year, that would inspect all of the sites this year, that would see to it that certificates of approval are reviewed every three years after that, that would see to it that each and every facility that tests water in this province, every laboratory, is indeed an accredited laboratory within Ontario.

We are also going to ensure that any time a municipality or public utilities commission changes labs that were doing the testing for them, the ministry knows. The regulation, as I indicated on May 29, would also include that there are proper notification procedures in place, that the role of the medical officer of health, of the public utilities commission, of the lab doing the testing, of the local medical officer of health, that the roles everyone had ensured that any adverse test samples were communicated in an effective and timely manner and that information is shared.

This is something I'm doing as minister, and I can assure you that for once in this province we'll see our water protected by giving it the force of law via a regulation. That's what I would say to you.

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You also talk about issues of what your government did. Again, in 1992-93 and 1993-94, you cut \$26.4 million through your managed savings strategy; you cut the budget in 1993-94 by \$22.3 million—\$16.2 million of it for capital, \$6.1 million for operating. In 1993-94 and 1994-95, your expenditure control plan reduced money to the ministry by \$55.1 million; in 1994-95, you cut the blue box program by \$5 million; you cut your capital budget by \$5.2 million; and you cut \$2.5 million from the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

**Ms Churley:** Everybody knows that since you took over the government you have cut the staff by about a third from what it was in 1994-95 and you have cut the budget by over 40%. That's a fact. I want to ask you, will you revoke the decision to end the water protection fund? You keep saying you've accelerated it from three years to two years, which means it's used up faster. Are you still committed to having zero dollars in that program next year, or are you going to revoke that decision and continue with that fund? Just say yes, Minister, this time.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The member would know that yes, she is absolutely correct; that money was accelerated. We accelerated to over two years a \$200-million fund that was over three years. There is money in that fund. She would know that for the final completion of projects there is the holdback; there is the money there.

I draw her to the Blueprint document. I encourage her to read through that with respect to the SuperBuild Corp and the fact that there's \$20 billion over four years in infrastructure money for this government to use. We had an infrastructure deficit in this province because governments of the past failed to invest in infrastructure. That's why, through SuperBuild, the government is giving priority to municipal water needs in proposals for funding under the SuperBuild Millennium and the Ontario small

towns and rural fund. As well, you would know that negotiations are underway with the federal government to give priority to infrastructure funding that is directed at municipal water projects.

**Ms Churley:** That's a long way of saying no. OK. You've mentioned the SuperBuild fund. David Lindsay has said he doesn't think that most of the money from the SuperBuild fund should go towards sewer and water projects. This money has got to be spread over a lot of towns, a lot of municipalities in Ontario, for a lot of different projects. How much money out of that SuperBuild fund would you say should go into sewer and water programs?

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, you would have to agree that this is the first government to have a multi-year infrastructure program. Your government didn't have it; the Liberal governments in the past didn't. This is a multi—

**Ms Churley:** We did so.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You did not and you know it. I'm surprised that you brought up the Jobs Ontario project. I won't even get into that at this point.

The fact of the matter is that the government is giving priority to proposals for funding for municipal water needs under the SuperBuild Millennium fund, also the Ontario small towns and rural fund. These are ways that money is getting there. We're also working with the federal government, negotiating with them to give priority to infrastructure projects that are directed at municipal water systems. This is good news for Ontario.

**The Chair:** The minister's time has expired. We now turn to the government caucus. We have about three or four minutes before we hit our time today.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, yesterday we heard about Drive Clean and some significant investments on very qualified people. It's essentially a tool to improve air quality in Ontario. I commend the Mike Harris government for making that significant investment in air quality in the province. There are two other tools that are very important to protecting our environment: environmental assessments to operate and certificates of approval. Can you or one of your staff members explain in detail how those two tools can ensure that our environment continues to be improved?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll actually do both. I'll answer and then I'll refer the more technical nature to Michael Williams.

Activities that are environmentally significant, such as water and sewage treatment plants, industrial waste water treatment plants, air emissions from industrial sites, landfills and recycling sites, are thoroughly reviewed by professional engineers and other technical specialists. What we have done is streamlined the approvals process through administrative changes which enable the less environmentally significant applications to be reviewed expeditiously within a work unit that specializes in these types of applications. These applications include diesel generators for standby power, heating equipment for large buildings, and water mains and sewers.

The Ministry of the Environment is indeed committed to processing applications for certificates of approval in a timely manner to provide certainty and clarity for proponents and the public about when decisions can be expected. We have a commitment in the ministry's 1999-2000 business plan of 55 days for the timely processing of applications for air emissions certificates of approval. On average, these applications are processed within 48 days.

I'd now like to turn it over to Michael Williams.

**Mr Williams:** The minister has just outlined some of the changes that we have made to the certificate of approval program under both the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act. I would like to respond to the other part of the question that was raised with respect to the Environmental Assessment Act, which as you know is a very important piece of legislation for environmental protection in the province.

I'd like to let the members know that in the past the reviews that the ministry undertook for environmental assessments took up to two years to get a decision and to get completion, and the environmental assessment program in the province was heavily criticized for these lengthy review times. There has been a recent amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act that occurred in 1997. The changes that occurred to the legislation then made a number of improvements to provide for things like terms of reference that would lay out the ground rules under which an environmental assessment would be conducted so that there was certainty and clarity for both the person proposing the environmental assessment, for the public and for other interested parties in understanding how it was to be undertaken.

Also, that amendment to the legislation enshrined something which is very important, in our view, and that is making public consultation mandatory. It's very important that the public be heard on these matters when there are environmental assessments going on. Further, there were provisions made to the legislation which would allow for mediation at such times when there were tough and difficult issues that needed to be resolved throughout the processing of these applications.

In addition, the minister now has the ability to set deadlines for key components of the assessment and can refer matters to things like the environmental assessment and appeals board to get a decision. Those matters that are referred to the board can be scoped to the basic issues at hand so that we can get decisions on these projects.

I want to tell you a little bit about the process in my branch and how that particular process works. The Environmental Assessment Act deals with very environmentally significant projects. We heard earlier about a proposed landfill site expansion in eastern Ontario. That's a typical kind of application that would come before my branch for consideration. We would also deal with things like transit proposals, highways, perhaps incinerators, and in doing so it's our responsibility to have a large team of reviewers with expertise to be able to look at all of these applications. We now manage that team. That team is known as a government review team,

and the job of the planners in our environmental planning unit is to be able to have that team make some decisions on the particular matters at hand.

As I mentioned, the amendments that were proposed addressed a number of historical problems we were having with being able to arrive at decisions and also to deal with some fairly lengthy and very costly hearings that had gone on before the environmental assessment and appeal board.

We think we're providing much better service now with respect to reviewing environmental assessments.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but we'll have to hold the remainder of that answer over to the next time

we'll be in session. There is about an hour and a half—and the clerk will provide an official time—of ministry estimates remaining. The date and time for those will be established. I understand there was some discussion among the House leaders about possible intersession hearings, but the normal standing orders provide for us to meet again when the House does.

I'd like to thank all the members of the committee for their participation and the minister for his involvement today.

*The committee adjourned at 1800.*







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Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge PC)

#### **Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes**

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Ms Anne Marzalik, research officer, Research and Information Services





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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 26 September 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 26 septembre 2000

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Ministry of Education

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 26 September 2000

Mardi 26 septembre 2000

*The committee met at 1534 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** Welcome, Minister. With your permission, we'd like to start the proceedings. I'd like to welcome everyone. Perhaps we could advise the third party; I know they were here a few moments ago.

For the benefit of everybody, the hour and 31 minutes remaining for consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment will be divided among the three parties, continuing from where we left off. In the 20-minute rotation, the government caucus had used four minutes, and so we will resume with the remaining 16 minutes. We will then go through the rotation once, with 20 minutes per party, and that will leave a final 15 minutes, which we will divide at five minutes per party. At the end of that, I will call the votes and, following the voting, we will consider the estimates of the ministry, which is allocated seven and a half hours, with a 30-minute statement expected from the minister and then each of the three parties for 30 minutes.

Just as a reminder, I will be ensuring the proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of all the members, so that the democratic rights of all members will be assured.

**Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):** Did you say statements?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I was just reminding the committee as a whole for the ministry that follows you. The ministry which follows you is the Ministry of Education.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** The purpose of the committee is to review the projected expenditures of the ministries selected for consideration. To that end, I will endeavour to ensure that members ask questions in a respectful manner to elicit relevant information and the ministers and their representatives have the opportunity to answer and present their views. This part of the estimates committee, though, is about questions and answers. It is up to the minister to give an answer or not give an answer, but it is important that they not be unduly long answers and that the answers be on topic. I hope all members will exhibit the goodwill that we need.

I now turn to the government caucus for 16 minutes to complete their turn. Mr Barrett.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** Minister, I appreciate the fact that you've been on the water file every day for a number of months now. In August you announced the drinking water protection regulation for large waterworks and, in addition, on August 8, announced Operation Clean Water, a series of action steps to prevent a recurrence of issues like Walkerton. I would mention that all MPPs around the table have a deep respect for the people in Walkerton and an appreciation for what they've gone through for well over three months.

I applaud you for introducing the new drinking water protection regulation, a new level of protection for Ontario in terms of standards in monitoring, reporting and treatment. At this point, for the purposes of this committee I would wish to receive more details on Operation Clean Water and how it is designed to protect the people in Ontario. I direct that to the minister, the deputy or staff.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'd like to thank the Chair and the honourable members for the opportunity to continue the discussion that began in June with the standing committee on estimates.

Once again, I'm joined by my deputy minister, Stien Lal, my ministry's assistant deputy ministers and some of our directors. They are here to answer any questions regarding specifics that I may not be able to provide.

This has been a very active summer for the Ministry of the Environment, and we've been able to make strong progress on a number of fronts. Our ongoing efforts to improve the protection of the environment are meeting with great success. I am proud of the way we've been able to keep the momentum going, while also addressing the very difficult situation in Walkerton following the E coli outbreak. The result of our actions will be cleaner communities for all Ontarians.

I want to begin this afternoon by talking about the government's efforts to restore the municipal water system in the former town of Walkerton and about our broader initiatives to restore confidence in the province's drinking water.

As the regulator of public water systems in the province, Ontario is working with the owners and operators of waterworks to ensure the public's health and safety remains the top priority. The province is also aggressively developing new standards to protect our ground and surface water supply from pollution that may present



a risk to the safety of our drinking water. This is known as Operation Clean Water, and I would like to highlight some of those efforts for you here this afternoon.

We launched the program in August to focus province-wide efforts to improve water quality and delivery. The goals of Operation Clean Water are as follows: tough, clear standards with the full force of the law; effective inspection and enforcement; tough penalties for non-compliance; and strategic investments and efficient delivery practices.

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The tragic events in Walkerton raised concerns about the safety of water across the province. The Ministry of the Environment moved quickly to ensure that other municipal water systems are not at risk by:

Announcing, in June, an inspection blitz of all municipal water treatment facilities. As of September 15, the ministry had inspected 365 of the more than 620 water treatment plants in our province. Where inadequacies were detected, the owners and operators have been issued orders requiring corrective action. Results of these inspections are being made public on a regular basis. This blitz, which will be completed before the end of the year, is to ensure that all water treatment plants in this province meet provincial treatment standards for drinking water, adequately test their drinking water and have qualified operators running the systems;

Conducting a review and update of all certificates of approval for water treatment operations; and

Posting adverse water quality incident reports on the ministry Web site. The reports have been posted since July and continue to be updated on a regular basis.

As part of Operation Clean Water, the Ministry of the Environment introduced the new drinking water protection regulation, creating strict and mandatory requirements for large waterworks in the province. The new regulation, which came into effect August 26, ensures:

Regular and frequent sampling and testing of water;

Clear requirements for the immediate, person-to-person communication of potentially unsafe water quality to the Ministry of the Environment, the local medical officer of health and the waterworks owner. The requirement must be met by laboratories and owner/operators of waterworks. The ministry is currently reviewing all adverse water-quality reports to ensure all parties are meeting this requirement;

All waterworks staff who test for operational parameters must receive 36 hours of training in addition to the 40 hours annually they had to receive before August 26;

All waterworks staff who test for operational parameters must be licensed by the Ministry of the Environment;

Stringent treatment requirements for all drinking water;

Public quality reports on large waterworks are issued quarterly, with the first reports being due October 30;

Microbiological and chemical testing is conducted exclusively by accredited laboratories;

Public access to the records of all large water works; and,

Engineer's reports on municipal waterworks are submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, with the first reports due beginning this November.

A full package of information on the regulation was sent to municipalities across the province. The Ministry of the Environment held information sessions across the province in August to inform municipalities and other owner/operators of large waterworks of their obligations under the new regulation. The ministry also provided information at the annual meeting of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

After posting the regulation for public consultation, the ministry is currently reviewing comments.

With respect to small waterworks, we are addressing the appropriate level of regulation for small waterworks. We have launched a consultation with the owners and users of small waterworks, and a discussion paper has been released to guide the consultation process. Provincial ministries are informing stakeholders who may be affected by the consultation process and encouraging them to offer input.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, Dr. Colin D'Cunha, has formed a private water systems committee. The committee has prepared a preliminary report which lists 12 recommendations. The two main goals of the committee are to identify the most effective method of ensuring prompt notification of water results to homeowners and to prepare and recommend an education plan designed to assist homeowners in protecting the integrity of their private wells.

The Ministry of Health's public health laboratories will also test samples brought into the laboratories by individuals who have their own wells. The ministry is also accommodating the tenfold increase in water-testing requests that occurred during the summer.

This past summer, four publications regarding water wells in Ontario were revised. The documents are located on the new water regulation link on the Ministry of the Environment's Web site and through the ministry's public information centre.

The Ministry of the Environment, in co-operation with other ministries, is conducting an exhaustive review of Ontario government and broader public sector facilities that are not connected to municipal water systems. It is a priority of the provincial government to move quickly to ensure the broader public sector is aware of its responsibilities for the provision of safe drinking water.

On September 21, I announced the SWAT team, a major offensive against polluters, including the formation of the SWAT team and legislation introducing the toughest fines and longest jail terms in all Canada for major environmental offences.

The SWAT team will be a highly mobile compliance, inspection and enforcement unit. Its primary focus will be on finding companies or individuals that systematically or flagrantly defy the law by engaging in practices that damage public health and the environment.

On August 10, my colleague the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, announced immediate infrastructure investments that focus on water safety, as well as a long-term water and sewer infrastructure investment and financing strategy. The minimum \$240 million in provincial support is to help Ontario communities comply fully and quickly with the new drinking water protection regulation. The government's investments will flow through the OSTAR initiative that was announced in the 2000 Ontario budget. Moving toward full cost recovery for water and sewer treatment services will be a fundamental principle of the government's long-term strategy to ensure that future investment needs are met on a timely basis.

With respect to the task force on intensive agricultural operations in Ontario consultation, consultations were held in January and February this year in response to ongoing concerns about the effects of intensive agricultural operations in rural Ontario. They were led by Dr Doug Galt, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who I see is here today, and by my parliamentary assistant, Toby Barrett. The objective was to develop options that meet both the productivity and environmental needs of the agriculture sector and rural residents.

On July 10, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Ernie Hardeman released the report and his proposal to establish standards for agricultural operations. OMAFRA also announced that they would do further consultation with key stakeholders during the summer on proposed new legislation.

Twenty-six rural water-quality and -quantity projects have been submitted under the four-year, \$90 million healthy futures for Ontario agriculture program. The government has committed \$1 million toward five projects and will be approving more. The program encourages the agri-food industry to enhance the safety and quality of Ontario food products, capitalize on marketing and exporting opportunities, improve rural water quality and make efficient use of rural water resources.

With respect to biosolids disposal and the application of septage, the Ministry of the Environment is currently reviewing its requirements for land application of sewage biosolids, septage and pulp and paper sludge to ensure strict environmental standards are met. These are all currently regulated through certificates of approval from the ministry.

With respect to groundwater monitoring and its strategy, during the next three years the Ministry of the Environment will invest more than \$6 million for the establishment of a new provincial groundwater monitoring network in partnership with Conservation Ontario, its member conservation authorities and some municipalities. The first monitoring stations will be in place this year, with more to follow. This network will provide more information for decision-making on water takings, drought management, protection of groundwater quality, land use planning and related health and safety issues. Work in eight critical watersheds began this summer.

Ensuring and improving the quality of drinking water is one of this government's top priorities. We are committed to ensuring that our Ontario drinking water standards incorporate and reflect the latest scientific information. Following a careful and thorough scientific review, the Ministry of the Environment is reaffirming the Ontario drinking water standard for fluoride and lowering the recommended level of fluoride in drinking water where fluoridation is practised. This change was posted for public comment on September 20. In addition, the ministry has adopted the federal government's guidelines for radionuclides.

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**The Chair:** Two minutes remaining.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair.

This strengthens current standards for four existing radionuclides and establishes limits for 73 additional radionuclides. The ministry is also proposing to adopt the Canadian drinking water guideline for bromate as an Ontario drinking water standard.

On September 20, the Ministry of the Environment released the 1998 and 1999 results of the drinking water surveillance program. More than 99.9% of the samples analyzed met the health-related objectives. This is a voluntary monitoring program carried out by the ministry and participating municipalities to provide information on the quality of municipal drinking water. The data provided by the program support standard-setting and provide an early warning system of emerging problems.

The program augments the routine monitoring of drinking water that municipalities carry out on a daily basis. This program will change and information will become more current as the ministry begins receiving quarterly reports on large waterworks beginning October 30.

As you can see, we've been very busy over the summer since we last met. I believe it was June 21. I'd like to thank all of the members here today for the opportunity to tell the standing committee on estimates about our efforts to alleviate the difficult situation in Walkerton and to ensure that no Ontario community ever has a similar experience.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Minister. That concludes your time. I now turn to the official opposition, Mr Bradley.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mrs Dombrowsky will begin.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Mr Minister, I have with me a copy of a letter that the Premier wrote in 1995 to the community of Vaughan. In this letter he indicated very clearly—and this was part of your election platform when you made a number of promises to the people of the province—that you would return the responsibility for waste management to municipalities and also that no municipality would be forced against its will by a Harris government to accept another municipality's garbage.

Even as recently as today in the House, the Premier made reference to "a willing host." First of all, what I'd



like to understand from you this afternoon is, what do you consider a willing host?

**Hon Mr Newman:** On this issue that you're talking about, in the statements the Premier made he also said that this government would ensure that equity and fairness are foundations for waste management.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I don't see that in the letter.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You've asked a question and I'm answering it.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You've made reference to something in the context of the letter that I don't see. If you could point it out to me.

**The Chair:** Mrs Dombrowsky, if you could let the minister answer and we'll see where we end up. Mr Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to answer the question.

I was saying that in a statement to this issue, the Premier also said that this government would ensure that equity and fairness are foundations for waste management, and the most important aspect of any disposal option is that it must go through a full environmental assessment.

This government maintains that equity and fairness must be the foundation for decision-making in the area of municipal waste management. The tool is to ensure this happens, and that's the environmental assessment process. Ontario's environmental assessment requires that proposals like the Adams mine—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** He's not answering the question.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr Minister.

To explain it, Mrs Dombrowsky, you put the question; the minister puts the answer. If you think you've been answered or you're not receiving the answer you'd like, you can indicate. It's your time to use as you see fit.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I would, for clarification, perhaps restate: how do you define a willing host?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll get Michael Williams here from the environmental assessment director.

**Mr Michael Williams:** My name is Michael Williams. I am the director of environmental assessment and approvals for the Ministry of the Environment.

The issue of a municipality's willingness or desire to support a project or be a host for a project is part of the overall environmental effects that are considered when an environmental assessment is undertaken. There are both positive effects and negative effects that are considered. When we look at the environment, it's the social, cultural, natural and economic features that are looked at.

I would suggest that the desire of a municipality to have a site occur within their municipal boundaries is best expressed in the context of an examination of the social and cultural aspects of the environmental assessment.

The other point I'd like to make about this is that there are other approvals required once the environmental assessment—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm interested in the definition of "a willing host."

**The Chair:** Are you able to help us with that?

**Mr Williams:** I'm able to help you with that to the extent that the willingness of a municipality to be a host or to agree to a project going in their particular area of jurisdiction is determined under the environmental assessment process.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** If I could, then, pursue that with the minister. I'm somewhat confused, because in recent media reports, the mayor of the town of Napanee, which is the proposed host for the Richmond landfill expansion, has insisted that you told him that the town could not stop the dump. He says that you told them, in fact, their opinion did not matter because they did not own the property. I quote from what the mayor said to the media: "It's not the mayor telling people that; it's the minister."

I'm somewhat confused, because your Premier has indicated that municipalities do have a role to play and yet you have certainly left the impression with the mayor of the town of Napanee that they don't. I was wondering if you would be able to clarify that for me this afternoon.

**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, I said no such thing. Canadian Waste Services requires approvals for the expansion of their Richmond landfill under the Environmental Assessment Act and, as well, under the Environmental Protection Act. I approved Canadian Waste Services' proposed terms of reference. Canadian Waste Services is now proceeding to prepare an environmental assessment in the courts with the approved terms of reference, and a decision regarding the proposed expansion of the Richmond landfill will follow the preparation, submission and public review of the environmental assessment.

I can tell you that Canadian Waste Services is currently developing an environmental assessment study group to work through the environmental assessment process.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** The Richmond landfill site is located on a fractured bedrock. The Ministry of the Environment engineered facilities policy states that fractured bedrock sites are not preferred for landfill. Will you implement this policy when you review the environmental assessment for the Richmond landfill?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I refer that to Michael.

**Mr Williams:** The policies that will be looked at will all be examined under the environmental assessment as Canadian Waste Services proceeds with this. The issue of bedrock fractures and subsurface conditions will be thoroughly examined by technical experts, and the Ministry of the Environment staff will be making a recommendation to the minister based on how those concerns and issues are addressed and what technical concerns come to light. If it's proven that that site is not acceptable to have a landfill expansion on those grounds, then the approvals would be denied.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Will you guarantee that the Richmond landfill will not become a contingency location for Toronto garbage?

**Mr Williams:** I am not aware of the plans for Canadian Waste Services' area of service or the nature of



the waste that would be proposed to enter the Richmond landfill, but I would undertake that we can pose that question to the proponent of the environmental assessment during the review, and we can ask them to address where they plan to get waste from to be deposited on the site then.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Finally, in the riding of Sarnia-Lambton is the site Safety-Kleen, the toxic, hazardous waste landfill site, and it has been drawn to the attention of my colleague MPP Caroline Di Cocco that there has been neglect at this site. Ms Di Cocco has requested that a full-time inspector and geotechnical engineer be placed at the site, as they have been in other sites, by the Ministry of the Environment.

The Environmental Commissioner has stated that this is a reasonable request. What action will the ministry take on this matter?

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**Hon Mr Newman:** First off, I answered that back in June. I don't know if you recall that or not.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm asking this on behalf of my colleague.

**Hon Mr Newman:** She asked it. She's the one who asked it, though.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Obviously, maybe there hasn't—

**Mr Bradley:** She didn't get an answer then. She thinks she might get one now.

**Hon Mr Newman:** She got an answer. Carl?

**Mr Carl Griffith:** Carl Griffith. I'm assistant deputy minister of the operations division at environment.

We have had ongoing discussions over the past several months with Safety-Kleen. We're working on the terms of reference. They seem to be quite willing to entertain the notion of hiring additional staff who would be full-time inspectors at the site. My regional staff are working closely with the company and we hope to have some form of agreement and arrangement done in the not-too-distant future.

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** Minister, with regard to the Adams mine, we're all very curious about using a fractured rock pit, as my colleague has said, for a landfill, as it tends to go counter to the best principles of the day that say that to find an ideal site, one wants to keep water and garbage separated. Designers do this through design, the use of liners, be they plastic or rubber, in order to prevent this contamination of water.

If we were to put our heads together here and try to find the ideal site in Ontario, would we design something like the Adams mine today? Would that be the chosen type of site the ministry believes in?

**Mr Williams:** I'd like to address the question around the issue of hydraulic containment and potential groundwater and surface water contamination because I think it's really important that we are absolutely clear on what's proposed for that site. I accept the question in terms of, is that the best set of circumstances for which a landfill should be sited on?

I want to speak just for a moment around hydraulic containment. What that means is the inward flow of

water, from groundwater into the pit or the landfill site, and that inward flow will prevent the outward movement of leachate, away from the site. The only way that will work in a practical sense is where the level of water in the pit is much lower than the water that is flowing into it.

That is the situation that's known as hydraulic containment and that's exactly what we've got with respect to the Adams mine. As long as the level of water in the pit does not rise higher than the groundwater coming in, then that's suitable. That's something that has to be safeguarded and that's a simple law of nature.

**Mr Ramsay:** Is that the ideal situation, to put 20 million tonnes into that situation, knowing that we are dependent on a mechanical operating system for, as you know, according to the proponent, up to 100 to 125 years in order to keep that hydraulic containment principle sound?

**Mr Williams:** We've been assured, and my engineering and hydrogeological experts have looked at this thing from a number of ways. It's thoroughly reviewed. We don't believe there's potential for contaminants within the waste to enter the surrounding groundwater as long as the hydraulic containment is maintained.

I'd like to address the issue of maintaining the hydraulic containment because you quite correctly raised the matter, that there's a long time in the future that this would have to be looked at if that site is used. I'd like to explain that in the context of financial assurance and how we're planning to manage that.

The financial assurance program that the ministry has is designed to ensure there's sufficient funding collected to have that site appropriately maintained in the long term. Under the certificate of approval that's issued for the Adams mine, there are a number of conditions pertaining to this. I can tell you that the financial assurance plan was approved in December 1998 and it's incorporated in there for three things: for the closure of the site, post-closure care and contingencies.

Let me just give you an idea of the level of protection that will provide. The financial assurance will be provided to the ministry based on how much material comes into the site over time. The total closure cost of that pit is estimated at approximately \$5 million. That means there will be a requirement for 17 cents per tonne of waste to go in for the one-time landfill closure cost.

But you asked me for more than the closure; you asked me for the post-closure information. The provision for post-closure care will cost 99 cents per tonne of waste received and the provision for any contingencies is costed at 50 cents per tonne. What that means is that there's \$1.66 per tonne in 1997 dollars that will be collected and it will be annually adjusted to account for inflation. There's a 20-year lifespan predicted for that site. If the site is utilized and if the average annual fill rates of approximately 700,000 tonnes to a million tonnes of waste occur, then the total amount the government will collect for financial assurance at the end of that site's life

will be in excess of \$20 million for post-closure care and \$10 million for—

**Mr Ramsay:** OK. I'd like to move on to another question, because everybody talked about this being an ideal site. Is there another type of site like this in Ontario?

**Mr Williams:** There are three sites in Ontario that employ similar principles of the groundwater flowing in and that pressure that I talked about in my response earlier. The Halton landfill, the Grimsby landfill and Green Lane landfills all rely on those principles.

For the proposal for leachate containment and collection, the exact system that's being proposed is operational in Canada. It's in Saskatchewan at the Rabbit Lake uranium mine. That was brought to bear during the hearings and was demonstrated during the hearings as an operational element so that people could have some degree of confidence that this was actually occurring, that these principles were in place in Ontario and that the actual practice of what's proposed for leachate containment and the collection system is in place in Canada.

**Mr Ramsay:** Since Walkerton, I see at home that people have really developed a new appreciation of how we should be caring for groundwater. That we purposely design a site that uses these vast quantities of groundwater as a cleaning and filtering agent for the toxins in garbage, with the hope that we can collect every last drop of that and put it through a purification plant before we discharge it to the environment, is just not the sort of project we should be embarking upon today. It's just too big a gamble.

We're talking about some of the best water in Ontario. As you know, it's right at the top of the Atlantic watershed. For the lifespan of this project, to be using that vast quantity of water that I would say in 25 or 50 years we're going to really have a need for in Ontario is criminal. I would just say to the minister I would advise that we don't undertake this project or any other project that purposely uses that.

I know in the end sometimes we have to have a landfill, but we should be seeking sites where we can guarantee as much as possible that we keep water away from the waste so we don't contaminate our groundwater, and not embark upon this foolishness. To me it's a crashout and I would just plead with you not to go ahead with this. Thank you.

**Mr Bradley:** You have had the Premier hire on your behalf one of the top spin doctors in Ontario, public relations expert Paul Rhodes, who used to work in the Premier's office. He also worked for Ontario Hydro at \$225,000 or \$250,000 a year, one of those figures anyway. Very high-priced help he was. He seemed to be there when the Premier perceived there was some kind of public relations problem, or he would call it a communications problem. I would have thought the money for his salary would have been expended on environmental officers in Ontario instead.

How much is the taxpayer of Ontario paying Paul Rhodes to do public relations for the Ministry of the Environment?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I want to say to you that the situation in Walkerton has created considerable concern for the people of Ontario. It's important to ensure that we as a ministry were effectively communicating the necessary information to the people of Walkerton in a timely fashion. Given the increased attention on water initiatives, it was necessary to hire additional resources to communicate the initiatives we've undertaken—

**Mr Bradley:** How much are you paying Paul Rhodes?

**Hon Mr Newman:** —to assure the people of Ontario that their drinking water is safe. We've had several initiatives: first off, we've replaced 4.6 kilometres of water mains—

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**Mr Bradley:** All that is fine, Mr Minister, but it's not the question I asked. The question I asked was, how much are you paying Paul Rhodes?

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** Give him a chance.

**The Chair:** Order, Mr Galt. We're giving the minister ample time to answer the questions.

**Mr Bradley:** The question was specific, Mr Galt. You can be the block if you want.

**The Chair:** Mr Galt, your turn will come. You'll be able to dictate what kind of answer and question you have.

**Mr Bradley:** It was a very specific question: how much is the taxpayer of this province paying Paul Rhodes to work on behalf of your ministry at the present time? I didn't ask for a description—

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I'm trying to explain—

**Mr Bradley:** Yes, but I'm not asking for a description, I'm only asking for a figure.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm trying to put it into some sort of context for you. All I'm simply saying—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** Galt, quit playing the donkey over there. All we're asking for is a specific question. If you enjoy playing the donkey to get on the Premier's good side, that's fine for you. I'm asking a question for the taxpayers of Ontario: How much are you paying Paul Rhodes? You can't afford people in the ministry—you've fired 900 of them out the door—but you can damned well hire Paul Rhodes. How much are you paying him? That's the question I'm asking. Never mind the blocking from that donkey.

**The Chair:** You've put your question. Minister, if you choose to answer the question, it's up to you.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll simply say obviously it's a contractual matter between the government and the individual—

**Mr Bradley:** The taxpayers are paying him, Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** —and it would be breaching some sort of privacy concerns there.

**Mr Bradley:** The taxpayers are paying him, Mr Minister. How much are they paying him?

**The Chair:** Mr Bradley, I'm going to ask you to ask another question or to address something to the minister.



**Hon Mr Newman:** I've answered your question. You raised the question of hiring staff. You know that there are 65 new additional Ministry of the Environment staff, who are now—

**Mr Bradley:** I know all that. I want to know what we're paying Paul Rhodes.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You asked a question that touched on ministry staff, so what I wanted to do was to highlight to you that there are 65 additional staff. I announced last week, within the Ministry of the Environment, they will be part of our environmental SWAT teams—

**Mr Bradley:** I know what the deputy minister makes; I want to know what Paul Rhodes makes.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You know what they make. There will be inspectors; you know that there will be investigators; there will be many other people within the separate unit within the ministry. It's a campaign commitment—

**The Chair:** Sorry, Minister. Mr Bradley, your time has almost expired. There's one minute, if there is a further question you'd like to put. But I'll ask now, in advance, because there will be one more round; it'll be a brief round. I'll ask for everybody's reasonableness. I will rule out of order anyone who is not.

**Mr Bradley:** The last question I would ask you is this, Mr Minister: are you giving an undertaking now that a condition of sale of all coal-fired plants in the province of Ontario, stipulated by your government, will be conversion to natural gas?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You know we have a review of all the coal-fired facilities in this province underway. We announced it in May. It's a very exhaustive review on the part of our ministry experts to evaluate each and every one of those five facilities that are coal-fired in the province. We're working hard to ensure that all these environmental safeguards are in place, and we've said that those safeguards must be in place before any of those facilities change hands.

**Mr Bradley:** So the answer is no. I detect from that the answer is no.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I think I've answered to your question.

**The Chair:** The answer is the answer, Mr Bradley. Thank you.

We now turn to the government side. You have 20 minutes, Mr Mazzilli. Pardon me; it's my mistake. It's the third party for 20 minutes. Mr Hampton, my apologies.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have some specific questions and I wonder if you can give some specific answers. Can you tell us how many companies in Ontario today currently have program approvals issued by your ministry that effectively grant them immunity from prosecution even though they are out of compliance with pollution standards?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There would be no companies that can violate the laws of this province. There are no companies that are allowed to pollute our environment.

**Mr Hampton:** Will you table a list of all the program approvals currently in effect?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes, of course. We're always willing to share information with you.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll repeat the question: Will you table a list of all the program approvals currently in effect?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which program approvals? You're not being specific enough for me. Normally you would give me a very specific question. That's a very broad question there.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm asking you to table the program approvals currently in effect through your ministry.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which programs? You're not being specific enough. I'm trying to help you.

**Mr Hampton:** We'll move on. Your senior ministry staff have documented at least 111 industrial plants in Ontario that are consistently out of compliance with Ontario's clean water regulations. They say that, as of March of this year, 79 of them have been out of compliance for more than two years, yet they are not even being addressed by the Ministry of Environment. Your staff said that these companies are putting contaminants into waterways that affect drinking water, but nothing is being done.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll have Carl Griffith help you out here.

**Mr Griffith:** I don't have the statistics in front of me to comment on the accuracy. I would state that—and I think the minister has answered this question before—when you look at the discharges report and people who are out of compliance, that can range from a whole list of non-compliance issues, from operating procedures to actual discharges. We do take action on those items, so I would—

**Mr Hampton:** Do you deny that 79 companies were out of compliance for two years or more?

**Mr Griffith:** Mr Chair, I can neither confirm nor deny that. I don't have those statistics with me. I would be happy to try to confirm those numbers, but I don't have—

**Mr Hampton:** Will you provide us with the names of the companies that have been out of compliance for two years or more?

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** All questions should be pointed to the minister.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** That's what we want.

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, direct your intervention to the Chair. I'm going to be adding time to the third party if there are interventions that aren't warranted.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm waiting for an answer, rather than a—

**The Chair:** It is entirely at the discretion of the ministry to answer or not.

**Hon Mr Newman:** We can provide the information. We've been forthright in sharing information. You would know that.

**Mr Hampton:** In 1998, your ministry identified 3,300 water pollution violations by industrial and municipal



plants. Some of these, including Walkerton, by the way, were long-time repeat violators and yet there was only one single prosecution. Can you explain that?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Are you talking about waste water discharge here? Is that what you're talking about?

**Mr Hampton:** I'm talking about a series of water pollution violations by industrial and municipal plants.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes, I just want it to be a little more specific. Then I can try to answer that question for you.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, put it this way: take your pick. There was only one prosecution. Can you explain having only one prosecution, when it was pretty clear that there were a series of water pollution violations?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Carl, can fill you in on our efforts to have industries and municipalities comply with the laws of this province?

**Mr Griffith:** I'd like to again try to address that question. I don't have those statistics in front of me and I'm sorry. But prosecutions are only one way that we get companies back into compliance. We do try to work with companies. We do issue orders. Prosecutions can take a long time. That is right at the tail end of our attempts to get companies back into compliance, so an awful lot of work and compliance takes place in the absence of having a prosecution. Again, I cannot confirm—I'm sorry—at this time the statistics that you're reading.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll move on and get to another area. Last week your ministry finally got around to releasing the drinking water surveillance program, DWSP, results for 1998-99. Can you explain why you've narrowed the scope from health-related guidelines to only health-related Ontario drinking water objectives? Can you explain how these reports can make the claim for many communities that no health-related ODWOs were exceeded when, according to documents released by MOE in 1996, this program stopped sampling for some of the most important ODWO health-related parameters?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's really Jim MacLean.

**Mr Jim MacLean:** I'm Jim MacLean, the assistant deputy minister of environmental sciences and standards. The Ontario drinking water surveillance program monitors, on a voluntary basis, a range of 200 parameters in communities. The surveillance program is not a compliance monitoring tool but an early detection system for problems and issues that arise in such communities. The information is provided to the drinking water owner, to operational staff and to the public. The Ontario drinking water objectives, all of the health-related parameters, are part of the scan except for the bacteriological samples. With those parameters, given the surveillance program that looks at each of the waterworks from one to six times a year, it was decided that this was not the appropriate mechanism, the surveillance program, to address those. There was monitoring required under the objectives and now under the new regulations of those bacteriological parameters at a great deal higher frequency than the surveillance program was going to be able to mount. It was felt that the decision to curtail those

bacteriological parameters was based on the high probability of not detecting, given the low frequency of the surveillance program.

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**Mr Hampton:** Don't you think it's a bit misleading to some Ontarians? They get a report; they'll get into the executive summaries for Balmertown, Nipigon and Owen Sound. That's for 1998-99, so this is the material you released. It says in the text, "No other health-related ODWOs were exceeded." Somebody who gets this might think that, gee, their water has received a clean bill of health, wouldn't they?

**Mr MacLean:** I think the parameters that the surveillance program does measure are clearly described at the front end of that report. There is an indication of what parameters are measured and the references in the text are to those parameters that are measured as part of the surveillance program. It is not the only source of information available to the public on the quality of their drinking water. There are other sources available, particularly now under the new regulations.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you confirm that this surveillance program doesn't test for microbiological parameters such as E coli?

**Mr MacLean:** It does not and has not for some time.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you confirm that it doesn't test, for example, for cryptosporidium and giardia?

**Mr MacLean:** There are currently no accredited tests for cryptosporidium or giardia in Canada. This is a problem that the Canadian drinking water community is working on at this time, to try and develop accredited tests that will provide accurate results of the levels of those two parasites in water.

**Mr Hampton:** But can you tell me this: we've witnessed the disaster at Walkerton, over 2,000 people ill and at least six people have died. Wouldn't you put on this test then in red letters, "Please note E coli not tested for"?

**Mr MacLean:** We indicated clearly in all of the reports which parameters we're measuring for in doing the surveillance program and have referenced in analyzing each of the waterworks the parameters that we are measuring.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you tell us why, since Walkerton, you haven't started testing for E coli as part of this drinking water surveillance program?

**Mr MacLean:** Since Walkerton, we've put in place very strict requirements for measuring, reporting and notification on those measurements for E coli and other bacteriological parameters at a far greater frequency than the surveillance program is able to mount.

**Hon Mr Newman:** In fact, from the long-term monitoring point of view the drinking water surveillance program looks at those long-term trends in drinking water. If you're looking at the shorter-term focus, that's why the new, tough regulation calls for increased testing and sampling requirements. The very thing you want to see tested now is part of the regulation that those types of tests must be conducted and, more important, that they

must be conducted at accredited laboratories. I think that should give you some comfort.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to ask you a question about landfills. The Keele Valley landfill is set to close, and your ministry has done nothing to help Toronto find a solution other than direct them to the Adams mine site. Your own senior MOE staff told you that at least 183 landfill sites in Ontario will be full by the year 2005, and yet you haven't managed to ensure that a search for new sites is underway. Can you tell us why?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Basically all municipalities, including the city of Toronto, have a responsibility for their long-term planning for waste disposal. They have that responsibility. Michael can tell you a little bit more about that, but municipalities have that responsibility for the waste disposal.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you tell me then, if it's the municipality's responsibility, why did the province close Keele Valley?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Michael?

**Mr Williams:** Waste management is indeed a municipal responsibility, sir.

**Mr Hampton:** Then why did the province step in in Keele Valley?

**Mr Williams:** I think it's fair to say that there is an expectation, and there has been an expectation, that the useful life of Keele Valley would come to—

**Mr Hampton:** But that's for the municipality to decide. According to your rules, that's for the municipality to decide.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, I don't need any assistance from you. Once the minister has made a referral, staff may answer questions. I will ask you to refrain until you have your time.

**Ms Churley:** We would prefer for the minister to answer, actually. He keeps passing it off.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for the interruption. Mr Hampton?

**Mr Hampton:** Here's the conundrum: you say on the one hand that this is no longer a provincial responsibility, that it is a municipal responsibility. Yet the province steps in and says that Keele Valley will no longer operate. So which is it? Is it a provincial responsibility, in which case why aren't you doing something about the 138 other landfill sites that are due to reach capacity? Why do you only interfere in some? When is it a municipal responsibility and when is it a provincial responsibility? Which is it?

**Mr Williams:** I'd like to just clarify, Mr Chair, that it is a municipal responsibility. In the case of Keele Valley, the city has indicated that Keele will be closed in 2002 when it reaches capacity. So it's a decision they are taking.

I also have information, if you'd like me to outline the process, that the city of Toronto has used and has gone through to determine how best to manage its waste management decisions with respect to Keele and other

potential sites. Would you be interested in that chronology, sir?

**Mr Hampton:** No. The chronology isn't of interest. What's of interest is that the province seems to interfere in some sites and not interfere in other sites, and I still haven't received an explanation from either you or the ministry of how the Ministry of the Environment decides that at some sites the province will exercise a decision and in other situations it is foisted on to municipalities.

**Mr Williams:** In the program area for which I have responsibility, which is the environmental assessment program, I can advise the members here today that we have a large number of landfill proposals, either new or expansion, under consideration by my staff. All of them are being put forward by the respective municipalities.

**Mr Hampton:** That tells us nothing. Thank you.

We understand from reports by senior MOE staff that recycling by the ICI sector in Ontario is declining. Can you tell us what steps you've taken to rectify that problem? Why do we see a decline in recycling in that sector?

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'll let George do that.

**Mr George Rocoski:** My name is George Rocoski and I'm the acting director of the waste management policy branch.

The ministry, the government, has taken efforts to increase recycling activities through the creation of the Waste Diversion Organization.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you tell us why there has been a decline? That's historical fact. Why has there been a decline? I'd like you to answer the question.

**Mr Rocoski:** I don't have the figures that you're quoting from. I'm not aware of a particular decline from the ICI sector of recycling myself.

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**Mr Hampton:** Since you're the one chosen to answer this, I'm going to show you a document and ask you if you've ever seen this document before. It's a cabinet document and it's dated March 14, 2000. Did you ever see a draft cabinet document like that?

**Mr Rocoski:** I'd have to look at it closer, sir. I don't know.

**Mr Hampton:** Would you like to look at it more closely?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, if that's going to be entered in as evidence—

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, if you want to raise a point of order, please raise a point of order. Otherwise, please don't interrupt the proceedings.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: If the document is going to be presented—

**Mr Hampton:** I've already presented the document. I think everyone here has a copy.

**Mr Mazzilli:** —certainly the members of this committee should be—

**Mr Hampton:** Have you seen that?

**Mr Rocoski:** No, sir, I have not.

**Mr Hampton:** You've never seen that document?



**The Chair:** I'll be happy to make it available, Mr Mazzilli, on the point of order.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you ever had a briefing on that document?

**Mr Rocoski:** No, sir, I have not.

**Mr Hampton:** Have you ever heard that document referred to?

**Mr Rocoski:** No, sir, I have not.

**Mr Hampton:** So you've never seen or heard of—

**Mr Rocoski:** Not that document, no, sir.

**Mr Bradley:** The Premier always calls it a phony-baloney document.

**Mr Hampton:** Since the deputy is examining it, I'll ask the deputy. Have you ever seen that document?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, on a point of order: Questions should be directed to the minister.

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, I'm sorry but you are interrupting the proceedings unnecessarily and I'm just going to have to allocate time to make sure that—

**Mr Mazzilli:** There is no provision in the hearings to directly ask the deputy minister.

**The Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, I'm sorry, you are out of order and I'll ask you to co-operate. Mr Deputy.

**Mr Stien Lal:** Mr Chair, just to assist the committee, the answer is no, I have not seen this document.

**Mr Hampton:** And you've never had a briefing or a briefing note with respect to that document?

**Mr Lal:** Not with respect to this document, no.

**Mr Hampton:** And you've never seen a similar document dealing with the same issues?

**Mr Lal:** I may have seen documents that may be similar to this document, but unless I specifically see the document, I'm sorry, I can't assist you, Mr Hampton.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, let's cut to the chase. Have you seen a document by senior MOE staff that points out that recycling by the ICI sector in Ontario is declining and has been declining?

**Mr Lal:** Not to my knowledge, but if there is such an issue, it would have been brought to my attention by the director of the waste management branch.

**Mr Hampton:** So it's your position and the director's position that recycling by the ICI sector is not declining?

**Mr Lal:** No. What we've indicated is that we have not seen any evidence of it.

**Mr Hampton:** So it's your position, then, that it's not declining?

**Mr Lal:** Mr Chair, I think I've answered the question.

**The Chair:** Mr Deputy, your answers are your answers. I don't edit them. You're welcome to make that conclusion.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll go back to the minister. Your hand-picked Waste Diversion Organization says that Ontario probably can't meet the 50% diversion target without banning organics from landfills. Do you support the decision or the recommendation to ban organics from landfills and will you set a target date for that implementation?

**The Chair:** This is the final question. You have less than a minute to answer.

**Hon Mr Newman:** OK, Chair. That's the very reason why we created the Waste Diversion Organization. As you would know, they did submit a final report to me on September 1 of this year. We are committed to the blue box program and we want to ensure that it remains sustainable over the long term. Again, that's why we established the Waste Diversion Organization, to provide municipalities with the blue box funding support and the tools they need to achieve greater waste diversion, which I think is a goal that we all share. Waste diversion is an important aspect of the long-term sustainability of our environment and obviously I would encourage all municipalities and all sectors to include these alternatives in their waste management plans. The people who have worked on the WDO report have worked very hard. They've put a lot of time and effort into it. Obviously through their efforts we are going to respond to that report, but we, as a government, encourage recycling and other waste diversion methods in this province.

**The Chair:** The time has expired for the third party. I will now turn to the government side. You have 20 minutes.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, certainly I would like to know more about the Adams mine landfill project, but before I give you and the ministry an opportunity to explain in detail about that project, I have a few specific questions. Has the opposition or Dalton McGuinty himself provided any direct alternatives for landfill sites in this province to you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, he hasn't. He's offered no alternatives.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Has the environment critic, Jim Bradley, provided any alternatives to the Adams landfill site to you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, he hasn't, not as yet.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Has Mr Hampton provided any alternatives to you?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, sir, he hasn't.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Therefore, Minister, can you explain the entire process that you and your ministry undertook to create the Adams landfill site?

**Hon Mr Newman:** There was obviously a thorough environmental assessment undertaken on the project. I'm just going to go through it, and I'm going to have Michael Williams expand upon what I say. There is also an Environmental Assessment Board hearing, as you would be aware. There is also a judicial review of that, as well as an appeal of the judicial review. So there are many checks and balances along the way. The federal government has had an opportunity to be involved along the way; people have had an opportunity for input. There has to be a process in place, and that quite obviously is the environmental assessment process. That's left there for the experts to determine, whether or not all the environmental concerns have been met.

On the issue of process, I really think it's important that you hear that on April 23, 1992, Dalton McGuinty said in the House—it's in Hansard: "The environmental assessment affords an opportunity for an issue to be



heard in an impartial, objective manner by a group of experts who consider these matters intelligently, expertly and in a forum devoid of emotion." That's what he said. So obviously he agreed that the environmental assessment process is the way to go, and I would agree. That's why we undertook the environmental assessment on that. Michael Williams can fill you in with a few more of the details.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, one more question prior to the details: have you ever seen an environmental assessment in relation to a landfill being an easy decision or a non-contentious decision?

**Hon Mr Newman:** They're not easy decisions, obviously, but the experts, the engineers, make those decisions based on sound science and the protection of the environment. That is the responsibility of those people who conduct the environmental assessments. Michael Williams can expand on that.

**Mr Williams:** I'd like to answer the honourable member's question by outlining the process, since you raise some issues around it. I'd like to begin by saying that the original environmental assessment submitted by Notre Development, who is the proponent for that site, asked for government approval of three pits at the Adams mine site as landfills. This ministry said no. The ministry said no because there hadn't been enough work done to provide us with the information we needed to look at all aspects of that. The proponent then redirected their efforts to the south pit only, which is the proposal that is presently approved under an environmental assessment. They were able to provide us with all the detailed technical information we needed to undertake the reviews and analysis necessary to reach an informed decision on the proposal.

I'd also like to point out that during this process it wasn't just government reviews. There were peer reviews done on the work the proponent had completed, and those peer reviews were done in three principal areas: geology, hydrogeology and hydrology. It included a thorough and complete examination of the surface and groundwater potential for contamination from landfilling and predicting movement of leachate. I spoke a little earlier today about those. It also looked at the design and operation of the landfill. I'd like to make it clear that those reviews that were undertaken were in addition to what the proponent's engineers and scientists did and in addition to the ministry's experts.

As part of the Environmental Assessment Act review process, it is also important to know that we had a team of government ministries look at this proposal—and agencies, and it wasn't just then provincial government. The Ministry of the Environment of course spearheaded this effort with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Canada was there and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans was there, and they analyzed the Adams mine landfill proposal. All of those ministries and agencies contributed to developing the conditions that would be placed on that particular site.

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In addition, both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the federal government through Environment Canada participated on a monitoring and contingency planning working group, and this was looked at under the Environmental Protection Act application that was before us. We asked them to look at the details of the certificate of approval and ensure that all of their concerns were properly addressed before it was issued.

It's fair to say that during the process we received hundreds of submissions. That's understandable with respect to any landfill application. The issue that was raised first and foremost on the Adams mine proposal, the most critical environmental question that we had to wrestle with, was the concern that the pit would leak and potentially contaminate groundwater. I want to tell you that based on those public submissions there was a decision that a former Minister of the Environment made to determine that a public hearing was necessary on this issue. That public hearing was before the Environmental Assessment Board and it was held in 1998. The board was asked specifically to zero in and look at the design of the site and respond to concerns, given the presence of fractured rock which we've heard discussed and the potential concerns about groundwater contamination.

After hearing from the technical experts from the ministry, from the proponents' experts, from the public and from the local environmental groups, the Environmental Assessment Board gave its decision, and it concluded in that decision that the landfill could be approved subject to very specific conditions. It's fair to say that we're confident the board heard all sides of the argument, both pro and con. They had access to the best technical information available. The board rendered its decision, and it's a decision that the ministry accepts.

I want to be clear that one of the conditions the board applied on this required additional drilling and testing of the site hydrogeology to further confirm the information and substantiate the data collected to date before it would allow the director to make a decision on the Environmental Protection Act application. That work was completed. It was undertaken as part of the detailed technical review process under the Environmental Protection Act.

In September 1998 the Canadian Environmental Law Association, representing the Adams Mine Intervention Coalition, applied for a judicial review of the decisions that were made in 1998 by the Environmental Assessment Board, by the minister and by cabinet on the landfill EA. That judicial review did not go anywhere. The hearing was held by Divisional Court on July 13, 1999, and that court upheld that the minister and the board decisions on the Adams mine landfill could stand. I think it's important to note that following that decision there was leave to appeal and there was a request to overturn the Divisional Court's decision. On October 14, 1999, the Court of Appeal dismissed the application for leave to appeal. So there is, in our view, confirmation that the decision-making process that was followed was appropriate.

In April 1999 in my branch we issued what's known as a certificate of approval under the Environmental Protection Act. I think it's important for the members to note that the certificate that was issued had 66 conditions attached to it. It has requirements for the final site design, the operations, the monitoring, the inspections, the reporting, the contingency plans. It also has the financial assurance provisions that I spoke to earlier that will see approximately in excess of \$30 million to cover off concerns in the future with respect to post-closure care, landfill closure costs and contingencies. Mr Chair, I'm not going to go through that breakdown, as I've previously stated how those figures were determined.

The facts in the Adams mine case, when you take a look at the process that was followed, are certainly very clear. This thing has been thoroughly and professionally reviewed by a team of professional scientists, including geologists, biologists, environmental engineers, hydrogeologists from several provincial ministries, federal agencies, and the province's own northern development and mines. These experts were not only able to review the proposal, but I want to stress that they played key roles in proposing the terms and conditions under which the proposal could receive their endorsement. I want to assure all members that those terms and conditions that were discussed, reviewed, debated, proposed and confirmed are now part of the 66 on that certificate of approval.

In closing, let me just say that the decisions to approve the Adams mine landfill were made only after those thorough technical assessments were undertaken by experts in engineering and hydrogeology, both from inside and outside this ministry and the provincial government.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Based on the reports from all the engineers and professionals and so on and the court appeals, what conclusion do you come to? Is this landfill site safe for the future?

**Mr Williams:** The conclusion we would draw is that it is safe provided all the terms and conditions on the approvals that have been issued to date and those yet to come are met. We absolutely intend to ensure they are met.

**Mr Barrett:** I have a question for the minister concerning the SWAT teams. Minister, earlier this afternoon you described the various action steps of the recently announced Operation Clean Water. On September 21, you announced a major offensive against polluters, including not only legislation that has the toughest fines and the longest jail terms in Canada for major environmental offences, but you also made the announcement of the SWAT team.

Minister, several questions: How will the SWAT team improve the minister's ability to crack down on repeat polluters? Is this a new approach, and is it using new staff?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Yes, it is a new approach and yes, it is using new staff. This highly mobile and focused compliance, inspection and enforcement SWAT team

within the Ministry of the Environment will crack down on deliberate and repeat polluters and ensure that they comply with Ontario's environmental laws.

SWAT teams will aggressively pursue companies or individuals that systematically or flagrantly defy the law by engaging in practices that threaten public health and the environment. The new team will be a new group of environmental officers with an innovative approach. So yes, it is a new approach. They'll have technological support that will provide leading-edge environmental compliance. The SWAT field units will be equipped with state-of-the-art communications technology to draw on broader resources without leaving the field.

The unit will identify new and emerging trends and ensure that all necessary actions are taken to protect the environment. The SWAT team will be set up as a separate inspection, compliance and enforcement unit within the Ministry of the Environment. It will have its own management structure.

*A cell phone rang.*

**Hon Mr Newman:** Sorry, I was distracted by a cell phone here. There was some noise pollution there, Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll ask anyone else with cell phones to please kindly turn them off or take their conversations outside.

**Hon Mr Newman:** The team's members will include inspectors, investigators, environmental engineers, environmental program analysts, scientists and a laboratory technician.

By bringing polluters into compliance with Ontario's environmental standards, the SWAT team will deter companies and individuals who operate outside of the law. It will improve environmental protection by focusing on areas of greatest concern, such as air and water quality and hazardous waste.

The results of the SWAT team's compliance inspection and enforcement activities will be made available to the public. Existing staff that currently do inspections are able to handle most of the enforcement needs of the province. But as in the case of law enforcement, a more aggressive and targeted team is required if we want to better address specialized problem areas in a strategic way.

The team must have the ability to go after new and emerging issues and the flexibility and support to stay in the field to ensure that polluters are caught.

The SWAT team will target specific areas of concern. The SWAT team will be a highly qualified and specialized group. By strategically targeting known problem areas, SWAT will be able to get a high environmental rate of return for their time. This new team will complement our existing staff by focusing all of their efforts on compliance inspections and enforcement activities on specifically targeted sectors. They'll have a different approach and a different type of technological support.

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Existing staff respond to more than 22,000 notifications of spills and pollution reports, assist with more than 16,000 certificates of approval, permits and licences



that the ministry issues annually, and complete about 4,000 inspections on an annual basis.

The SWAT team will focus solely on inspection enforcement and will target specific sectors or groups. The SWAT team will also aggressively pursue repeat offenders and deliberate polluters.

Initially, the SWAT team will have 30 inspectors and nine enforcement investigators. The approach is new, and appropriate training, job definition and technological supports must be put in place. As these actions mature, the nature of the employment contract will be finalized. The ministry also wants to retain flexibility to ensure that this new approach is consistent with the best practices review by Valerie Gibbons.

We promised to get tough with polluters and we're keeping that promise. The SWAT team and tougher penalties will give us greater ability to deter and punish those who choose to operate outside the law and pollute our soil, air, and water. The SWAT team will aggressively pursue repeat deliberate offenders. The team will enhance our environmental protection goals by focusing on the areas of greatest concern: water quality, air issues, and hazardous waste management.

Only companies that defy the law and engage in practices that are damaging to public health and the environment need worry about the SWAT team and the tougher penalties. This will level the playing field. Those who defy environmental laws will not benefit at the expense of good corporate citizens who are in the majority and comply with laws of our province.

**The Chair:** Further questions?

**Mr Galt:** If I may, Minister, ask a couple of questions. One, I was kind of surprised in the Legislature to hear of a previous minister waiving environmental assessment. Is that something that you would be in the habit of doing, waiving environmental assessments?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No. In fact, if I could just go through my notes—

**Mr Galt:** I wouldn't want to mention the name that I heard about.

**Mr Bradley:** Rig the rules; change the rules. I wouldn't go there, Doug, if I were you.

**Mr Galt:** I was just checking to see if you were in that habit like some previous ministers in other governments.

**Mr Bradley:** I wouldn't go there if I were you, Doug.

**Hon Mr Newman:** My job is to protect the environment and that's what I do as the environment minister. That issue was indeed raised today in the House.

**Mr Galt:** I am shocked.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I have a quote from the other opposition party as well, from a former environment minister. This environment minister said, "There has not been an environmental assessment on the interim emergency solution for Britannia or Keele, nor can there be. That I acknowledge and that I regret." So they are not alone.

**Mr Galt:** The question I would really like to ask about is smog and some of the ozone problems. I have a daughter who lives here in Toronto and has asthma, and

I'm very concerned about this issue. Having been in environment before, for a period of four years that I really enjoyed as PA, I have some real concerns about the amount of ozone smog that comes across from the US, estimated at some 50% of the great brown haze over the city that we see on a humid day in the summertime.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, I'm having trouble hearing.

**The Chair:** We just have 20 or 30 seconds left.

**Mr Galt:** Maybe you could explain what you are doing to try and control this ozone from the States.

**The Chair:** Very briefly, please, Mr Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Chair, how much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Hon Mr Newman:** You've raised a very important issue. Well over 50% of the smog-causing pollutants that come into Ontario originate in the United States. In fact, there are parts of the province where over 90% of those smog-causing pollutants originate in the United States. That's a point that you raise. I wish I had some more time to expand on that.

**Mr Galt:** Obviously previous governments didn't do anything about this up until 1995.

**Hon Mr Newman:** They didn't. We are taking strong action on air quality.

**The Chair:** Mr Minister, by consent we could have you stay longer, if you wish. OK.

We now turn to the opposition party. Each party will have approximately four minutes. We let you run a little bit longer. Each party had about 21 minutes before. Approximately four minutes, and we'll start with Mr Peters.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** Let's just talk about transboundary pollution. Could you explain to me why you have cut and closed 16 provincially funded acid rain monitoring stations? You talk about trying to deal with the air, but you have authorized the closure of those 16 stations. Could you explain that?

*Interjection:* He did that?

**Mr Peters:** He did that. This government did that. And they're so concerned about the environment.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Certainly, I will be pleased to have Tony Rockingham fill you in on that answer.

**Mr Tony Rockingham:** My name is Tony Rockingham. I'm the director of air policy and climate change in the environmental planning integration division.

On acid rain, the Ministry of the Environment has substantial efforts that include increases in the number of monitoring stations that provide us with high-technology monitoring equipment which increases our knowledge of a number of pollutants, including nitric oxide—

**Mr Peters:** The question was why the 16 were closed.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Give him a chance.

**Mr Peters:** No. I was specific. I asked why close—

**The Chair:** Mr Peters, we will give him a reasonable chance to answer on behalf of the minister. Please continue, Mr Rockingham.

**Mr Rockingham:** The ministry has upgraded a number of its air pollution monitoring stations. The ministry



is working in conjunction with a number of universities to ensure that we take advantage as technologies change, to ensure that we take advantage of the increased knowledge we have about acid rain and the importance of biological monitoring.

We have partnerships with universities where we are able to measure changes in the acidifying emissions and the deposition that occurs in various areas, including wetlands, which turn out to be very good monitoring systems since the amount of deposition that falls in the wetlands is accumulated across large areas. That provides much better monitoring data than some of the old technologies that were used in the mid-1970s.

So we have increased our efforts on monitoring a range of pollutants and, as it turns out, we are able to affect economies here by ensuring that we can look at not only SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, not only NO<sub>2</sub> and NO emissions, but also we can collect information on particulates, we can collect information on a range of ambient air quality conditions.

**Mr Peters:** Minister, how many dollars are being allocated from the OSTAR program for water? How much money is being allocated for 2000-01?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That's \$240 million.

**Mr Peters:** In 2000-01?

**Hon Mr Newman:** No—

**Mr Peters:** How much for fiscal year 2000-01 from OSTAR?

**Hon Mr Newman:** That hasn't been determined yet.

**Mr Peters:** Thanks, Mr Chair.

**Mr Bradley:** My question, going back to the drinking water surveillance program is, why on earth did it take you until September 1990 to reveal the 1998 and 1999 drinking water surveillance program results?

**Hon Mr Newman:** You said 1990.

**Mr Bradley:** It's now September 2000. Sorry. I'm asking why we did not have that report revealed to the people of this province publicly, as it has been in the past, for 1998 and 1999 until September of 2000.

**Hon Mr Newman:** We do have the results for 1998 and 1999, and Jim MacLean can fill you in on those results. I can tell you that it is posted on the ministry Web site, as are the previous results.

**Mr Bradley:** I guess my question is this: every year it used to be published and be public knowledge for everybody. Now you either have to use freedom of information or you have to pry any piece of information out of this government. Why did you not put out your drinking water surveillance program in 1998 and 1999?

**Hon Mr Newman:** It is there on the ministry Web site today. People can see it. But more importantly, and I think you've got to acknowledge the new regulation as well that every major waterworks in this province must provide a quarterly report to the people who use that water system.

**Mr Bradley:** What took you so long in revealing it?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Jim MacLean can update you on our program.

**Mr MacLean:** The reports have never been issued from the drinking water surveillance program on an annual basis. The reports have always been bundled in groups of two or three years, so the first report covered the 1993-94-95 component of the program, the second report the 1996-97, the third report 1998-99. There was also a summary report done of the first five years of the program in 1997. That was issued in January of this year. So there has never been annual documentation of the results of the program. The results have always been provided immediately to the operations staff and to the waterworks owner. It has always been public information.

1700

**The Chair:** Third party. Ms Churley.

**Ms Churley:** I'd like to thank the minister and the staff for being here with us today. It can be rather gruelling at times. I suggest to the minister that he should be really pleased that there's such an emphasis on the environment now, because we know that there's a lot of stress within your ministry. Morale is very low, and I believe you need all the help you can get from the opposition and from the public to give you more clout around the cabinet table, not only to stop the cuts within your ministry because, as you know, in the last budget, when the deficit was completely eliminated, there was still a cut to your ministry—and I know, Minister, if you had been there at that time, you would have fought against that. But I'm looking forward to the future when you can get the cabinet and all these people sitting on this committee to support you in your efforts to get more money so you can staff up the ministry.

We know from a report that came out today, Missing Values, that there are environmental disasters waiting to happen. We know from a document that was released in 1998, a summary document for the delivery strategies, that ministry staff were told to not even concern themselves with certain violations of the law.

Then we have this, on top of many, many other documents, the draft cabinet document which was leaked to the NDP and we released—

**Mr Bradley:** Who was that released to, Marilyn?

**Ms Churley:** It was released to me, actually.

**Mr Bradley:** I just want to know if it was released to the NDP. I don't know about that.

**Ms Churley:** No, it was actually leaked to me, and I would say that this document is a cry for help. Although initially it actually recommended 500 new staff, at the end of the day it said—my view, reading between the lines. We know they're not going to do that. They've let go almost 1,000, so let's get real here and talk about a SWAT team of 136, was it?

**Mr Bradley:** It was 138.

**Ms Churley:** It was 138. We were at least expecting that and what did we get but 65 people who are going to do their best, but they're going to be dressed up in little uniforms and sent around in fancy cars with the press in tow and slapping tickets here and there to make it look like something is happening.

For heaven's sake, with all of those reports that we have had before us over the last several years since your government took office, this is not an adequate response to the problems that you have been warned about time and time again. I find it really offensive when we sit at these committee meetings that it's all about spin, and you sit there and brag about the hiring on 18-month contracts of 65 people who are actually going to go out and do the job of at least 500 people who should be rehired.

We have document after document. For instance, this particular document tells us very clearly that less than 10% of sources that can contribute to pollution and poor health in Ontario are now being investigated. Are you sitting there and telling us and the public out there today that 65 people based in Toronto, a SWAT team dressed up in uniforms, flying around here and there, are actually going to make a dent when less than 10% of pollution sources are actually being investigated?

We had a crisis in Walkerton. We were warned about that, that these kinds of things could happen. I believe the document that came forward today is another wake-up call to the government and your ministry to start re-investing in the Ministry of the Environment to hire back adequate staff across the province: scientists, technicians, not just a half-baked SWAT team who can't possibly do the job.

I wanted to come back to the—

**The Chair:** Ms Churley, your time has just about expired. There is only 45—

**Ms Churley:** OK. The EA was a rigged EA for the Adams mine project. Robert Power, when he was working for Gordon McGuinty, the proponent of the Kirkland Lake project, was also, behind closed doors, advising Mike Harris and your government about how to change the Environmental Assessment Act. That was going on at the same time. I consider that scandalous. That new EA, which didn't look at alternatives to the site, alternatives to the undertaking or any of these things, no intervenor funding for the citizens, was actually rigged behind closed doors.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Churley. Your time has expired. I now turn to the government caucus. We'll make it five minutes.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Don't I get a chance?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. As you know, Mr Minister, each caucus can spend their time any way they wish. You may, with the courtesy of your colleagues in the government caucus—

**Hon Mr Newman:** No, I equally want—

**The Chair:** But the question is from Mr Galt.

**Mr Galt:** I was just thinking in terms of some of the things our government has accomplished in improving our air. There's a great list here: the anti-smog action plan; the Drive Clean program; addressing climate change; emissions performance standards for the electricity sector; the US EPA court case intervention; the smog patrol; updating air standards; a \$4-million-plus investment in the air monitoring network, Partners in Air; smog

alert; resource materials; reducing the gasoline volatility regulations—a very impressive list indeed.

We heard a little earlier in the Legislature about how previous governments would waive environmental assessments. I know when the Minister, Brenda Elliott, and I went into the Ministry of the Environment, lo and behold, on the minister's floor we found about 40 workstations for political staff, which I understand were filled by political staff when Minister Bud Wildman was there. Both Brenda Elliott and Norm Sterling, the two ministers we had in the previous government, had less than 10 political staff. Bud Wildman and, I suppose, Ruth Grier had four times as many. Therefore I would think they would have accomplished four times as much.

From 1985 to 1995, have you any idea what was accomplished in the Ministry of the Environment by the unholy alliance that was in government at that time?

**Hon Mr Newman:** Which years?

**Mr Galt:** From 1985 to 1995. Have you any idea of what was accomplished? I don't have any idea that anything successful was accomplished then.

**Ms Churley:** I'll give you a list, Doug.

**Mr Galt:** It would be a short one.

**Ms Churley:** Oh, no. It's a long one.

**Mr Galt:** Seeing you don't have any—and I'm not surprised at all—maybe we could talk about cross-boundary smog. I think you totally answered the whole question there, that absolutely nothing was done for 10 years. Maybe you could tell us what you're negotiating with smog and ozone coming across the US border.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Galt:** It was a failure.

**The Chair:** You have a few minutes remaining. I'll ask for your forbearance. Mr Galt, I guess that was a question. Mr Minister.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I've just got to answer a question here from Ms Churley.

**Ms Churley:** I didn't ask the question.

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, I'm not going to give you the answer, then. I had a really good answer for you, but if you don't want to know that—with respect, you're talking about the Ozone Annex and air quality, obviously.

**Mr Galt:** Unless you want to tell us about the 40 people who were in Bud Wildman's office, the political staff.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I'm not going to talk about the 40 political staff there. But the Ozone Annex negotiations are one of the initiatives Ontario is engaged in to improve air quality in the province. Ozone is formed by the reaction in the atmosphere of nitrogen oxide and chemicals known as volatile organic compounds. The annex provides an opportunity to press the United States for greater reductions in these two smog-causing pollutants. As you know, more than 50% of the air pollution in Ontario is due to emissions in the United States. In communities such as Windsor, the percentage is even higher. I think I highlighted that earlier this afternoon. The annex would be an agreement between the two



countries to take specific steps to reduce emissions and to exchange information and data to foster a greater understanding of the impacts of smog. Ontario has supported the negotiations. We have committed to meet or exceed—

**The Chair:** We're in the last minute.

**Hon Mr Newman:** OK. We have committed to meet or exceed the emissions reductions from the electricity sector that the United States government requires states to make. In June of this year, we even went further by offering to accelerate reductions in smog-causing pollutants here in Ontario if the United States accelerates its efforts. Currently, we have committed to a 45% reduction across all sectors in emissions by 2015. The negotiations have been underway for several months and hopefully will be completed later this year. I am pressing the federal government to ensure that the US commits to going beyond their current efforts and that all parties understand the importance of actions to reduce smog-causing emissions.

I don't know if I have enough time left to ask Dr Tony Rockingham to expand upon that.

1710

**The Chair:** I'm afraid we don't, Mr Minister. Unfortunately, I understand that in the hall we have another ministry all congregated, ready to attend at their appointed time. I'd like to conclude on behalf of the committee by thanking all the participants and yourself, Minister, and your staff for assisting us today.

**Hon Mr Newman:** It's our pleasure, Chair.

**The Chair:** I will call the committee's attention to our vote. I will ask of the committee, shall we combine votes 1101 through 1104? Is there agreement or not? I heard a no.

Shall vote 1101 carry?

**Ms Churley:** Recorded vote.

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**Nays**

Churley, Curling, Peters.

**The Chair:** Shall vote 1102 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands.

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**Nays**

Churley, Curling, Peters.

**The Chair:** Shall vote 1103 carry?

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**Nays**

Churley, Curling, Peters.

**The Chair:** Shall vote 1104 carry?

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**Nays**

Churley, Curling, Peters.

**The Chair:** Shall the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment carry?

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**Nays**

Churley, Curling, Peters.

**The Chair:** Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment to the House? All those in favour, please indicate.

**Ayes**

Barrett, DeFaria, Galt, Mazzilli.

**The Chair:** Any opposed, please indicate. OK. Thank you very much. We are not adjourned; we will simply allow time for the Ministry of the Environment, and I will turn over the chair to the very capable Mr Alvin Curling, the Vice-Chair.

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** Minister, welcome to the estimates. As you know, there are seven hours and 30 minutes in time for estimates. We'll do the rotation of 30 minutes for your presentation and then we'll rotate for 30 minutes afterwards. It seems to me the time here will not allow us to do all the rotation, but we could start.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** Thank you very much, Mr Chair, and to committee members, I very much welcome the opportunity to be here before the standing committee on estimates again.

Last year in my opening remarks, I provided committee members with an overview of the government's education reforms and some of the plans we had for this mandate. Today I'd like to provide a bit of an update on



what we've accomplished over the past year in our efforts to improve our publicly funded education system.

First let me state very clearly that our goal for education reform is the same today as when we were elected in 1995 and then re-elected last year, and that's to give our students the best education possible and to focus on higher student achievement. We want to improve quality, to improve classroom funding, and to improve accountability not only to students but also to parents and taxpayers.

We fully recognize that we have a very detailed and a very comprehensive agenda for change. We also recognize that bringing change to a very large, complex system like education is certainly never easy and is almost always controversial. We also recognize that the job isn't done yet, although we like to point out that we have made, and would be very pleased to discuss where we have made, significant progress.

We're responding to demands by parents and taxpayers for fair and equitable funding, for more up-to-date and rigorous curricula and for regular assessment of our students' basic skills.

This is the third year of student-focused funding and we're continuing to follow our plan as laid out. Where possible, we are continuing to find administrative savings and to direct more of that money to the classroom. When required, we are investing new money in the classroom, as we did significantly this school year.

We've also listened carefully to our education partners, to suggestions about improvements in how we financially support the system. I'd like to just briefly outline some of the key priority areas.

First, of course, is special education. One of my first conclusions in this job was that special education needed significant help. The system was not meeting the students' and the parents' needs as well as it should, and we certainly needed to invest more resources.

In January, I announced a three-year plan that brings in province-wide standards for special education, that improves accountability to parents, and that also increases funding significantly. I should also note that this is the third year in a row that we've increased funding for special needs to boards across the province.

This year's increase was 12%; it amounts to about \$140 million in classrooms this school year. To break that out, \$43 million of that was in the special education intensive support amount, which supports our very high-needs students. As well, the special \$30 million top-up that had been put in last year will actually be maintained as regular funding this year and in future years.

1720

In the May budget we announced an additional \$70 million, that is in classrooms this year, to support early interventions for students from junior kindergarten to grade 3, to expand early learners' programs for students with speech and language disorders or for learning disabilities and also to increase the number of specialist teachers and professional support staff.

With all of these enhancements, the 12% increase, we're now spending more than \$1.3 billion a year on special education, which is certainly more than has ever been spent before. But the other point that is important to note is that boards cannot use these funds for anything other than special education.

We know that although certainly funding for special education is important, how we're using that funding is equally important. We've taken as part of our plan steps to make sure we have a continuous improvement process and also that we're giving school boards the stability they need to plan effectively. For example, in January of this year, many months before school boards are used to receiving this information, we gave them a guarantee that they would receive at least as much money as they'd had the previous year for high-needs students.

We're also looking at ways to work with teachers and boards to improve the process for allocating money for high-needs students to make it less bureaucratic. We had certainly heard there were some serious problems this year that clearly showed that some boards or some staff in some boards were having great difficulty meeting the needs. For example, one of the things that concerned me was when parents would be told their child couldn't receive service somehow because some form, application process or whatever hadn't been followed through on, which is absolutely incorrect. It's certainly not what the policy or any of the decisions should be putting in place. We need to be and are continuing to work with our partners to have a better process.

We're also setting standards for individual education plans for special-needs students, also for school boards' overall special education programs. Those standards will start to take effect in the 2001-02 school year. The reason we think it's important to set those standards, other than that that certainly reflects the recommendations we had from our education partners, is that we think it will clearly set out the responsibilities of the ministry and the boards; it will clearly acknowledge the best practices and make sure that all boards are following best practices; and it will also provide parents with a stronger voice in the education of their children. The emphasis on better and clearer standards will give parents a better picture of the services they can expect the school boards to be providing for their children.

As I mentioned, we have individual education plans which are required to be developed for every student who's been formally identified as having special needs. Starting this school year, we're going to be monitoring samples of those plans from selected boards because we want to make sure they're accurately describing the special education programs that are being provided, the services that each individual student should be receiving, and we want to make sure that if there are improvements that can be made, we can do so.

I mentioned our student-focused funding. This is our third year in this student-focused funding approach. Parents and taxpayers want to know that education spending is focused on the classroom, where it can do the

most good, and that's certainly the goal. We've introduced several measures to continue to cut costs of administration and bureaucracy and to reinvest those savings in teaching and learning.

Of course, as the members will probably recall, that school board administration since 1995 has declined by approximately \$150 million. For example, we have 2,000 fewer school board trustees. There are fewer school boards; there used to be 129 and now there are 72. There used to be 777 senior administrators working for those boards; there are now 512. We're starting to see that that money is shifting from administration into classrooms.

Members last year had raised several questions about that, so I'll just give a few numbers and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity with the staff here to go into it in more detail for the members.

If you look at the big picture, last year we spent approximately \$13.2 billion on elementary and secondary education. In the current school year, estimated overall spending will increase by \$300 million, bringing the total to about \$13.5 billion. Last year, classroom funding was \$575 million more than it had been in 1997, the year before we introduced our new funding model. This year we expect classroom spending to be \$700 million more than in 1997.

It's important to note that the provincial funding for education is also supporting approximately \$2 billion worth of new school construction and new spaces for approximately 170,000 students. Again, from 1995 to the year 2000, we've built 198 new schools, and there have been 150 additions to schools or major school renovations that have been completed because of the improvements in the way we fund school construction.

Last March we announced the details of funding for this school year and we outlined a number of priority areas in addition to what I've talked about. For example, we recognized the need to assist students who are facing challenges in meeting the new, province-wide standards for literacy and numeracy skills. We committed an additional \$25 million in new money to help students in grades 7 to 10 improve their literacy and math skills, certainly something that both parents and teachers said was an important priority.

To ensure that small rural and northern school boards in Ontario have sufficient resources to operate effectively, we increased funding specifically dedicated to the rural and northern schools by \$4.5 million. One of the other priorities had to do with improving English-language competency for both immigrant and Canadian-born children whose first language is not English. Accordingly, we have adjusted the criteria for the English-as-a-second-language grant. That means that boards will be able to increase their spending by \$20 million this school year.

We're also improving our support to the French-language school boards. We added \$10 million to those grants to help them face what is a very significant challenge for their students, who enter their schools often with less developed skills in their first language than

what you find with anglophone students. Those boards will have the flexibility to use this funding in the most effective way that they believe will help their students.

One of the other concerns we'd heard from teachers and parents was the need for more principals. We're adding \$10 million that is funding the hiring of 100 more principals this year province-wide. It also is allowing part-time principals to spend more time undertaking their responsibilities. Again, this will be of particular assistance to rural school boards and to French-language school boards.

We provide school boards with regular annual funding to purchase textbooks and learning materials. This school year, for example, there's \$67 million through the regular funding specifically for high school textbooks, to use one example. But recognizing the needs of the new curriculum, we have been providing additional funding on top of that. For example, we have provided an investment of \$30 million this year for textbooks and graphing calculators for our grade 10 students. This is in addition to \$30-million investment we made last year for our grade 9 students for textbooks and graphing calculators. There's also \$40 million in additional funding that is being used for textbooks and learning resources for grades 11 and 12 students as that curriculum rolls out over the next two years. This brings the total provincial funding commitment on top of the annual funding, as I mentioned before, to \$100 million for secondary school textbooks and learning materials.

One of the other pressures we heard about were transportation cost pressures, so this year there is an additional \$23 million to relieve those transportation cost pressures for boards. Again, we are continuing to work with our school board partners to improve how we fund transportation. It's an area where we have certainly said that we need to improve the way that funding works for boards.

As you know, most school boards, although not all, are in the bargaining process for new collective agreements. Certainly all of us share a desire for keeping our children in school. We all want to see fair and reasonable contracts negotiated this year without disruption to students and to classroom instruction, so part of the grant regulation announcement in March was \$182 million new money for compensation resources to assist boards in reaching those agreements.

1730

One of the other issues is smaller class size, again a very important priority from both teachers' and parents' perspectives. We've seen and we've certainly heard from parents and teachers about a disturbing trend towards larger average class sizes around the province. So we are taking steps to deal with this.

We took the first step two years ago and that was to cap the average class size across the school boards in legislation—something that simply had not existed before—to try and stop the upward trend and start a downward trend.



The second step: in May of this year we announced additional funding. It's a total of \$263 million for more teachers to have smaller classes. It works out to \$101 million to lower elementary class sizes. We have reduced the maximum board-wide average class size to 24 pupils for junior kindergarten to grade 3, for example. Also, of that \$263 million, \$162 million is reducing the board-wide average for high school classes as well.

Thirdly, another important step in stopping the upward trend and starting a downward trend: we're ensuring through the legislation that we passed this spring that school boards are clearly reporting on their average class size, both by school and on a board-wide basis, so that we know if it is working or if it is not working. Under the Education Accountability Act, I can direct an investigation if we have concerns that class-size requirements are not being met as they should be.

Again, one of the other pressures we recognize is the growing demand for new teachers, so we're working closely with Ontario's faculties of education and we've increased funding for new teacher training by \$45 million. Between last year and 2004, this is going to mean 6,000 additional new teachers coming out into our education system. Not only is it important to meet the demand for new teachers as we bring down class size and as enrolment grows in the system, but also one of the positive trends that we are seeing is a significant increase in the number of young people or people from other careers who are applying to teachers' colleges across the province to become teachers. So we want to make sure that the colleges have the positions to take advantage of the commitment that is being shown by people to be teachers. I think it's a wonderful, positive statement on teaching.

One of the other important initiatives we have deals with the new curriculum. As you know, as we said we would do, we introduced a new, more rigorous and comprehensive curriculum from kindergarten straight through to Grade 12. This is the first comprehensive top-to-bottom overhaul of the curriculum that has been seen. I don't know if anybody in our ministry's been around since Egerton Ryerson, but I am told by those who obviously have better memories than I that this is the most significant and comprehensive overhaul since Egerton set up the place.

Again, our overriding objective here with the new curriculum is to improve student achievement and to prepare students for success in the future, not only on the job or in apprenticeships but also in post-secondary education because we have certainly heard very clearly, from not only parents and students who'd left high school but certainly also from post-secondary institutions and from employers, that our students simply didn't have the skills, the knowledge, the abilities that they needed in order to succeed. So the new curriculum has been a lot of very hard work by a whole range of people—education experts, teachers, representatives from universities, colleges, employer groups—to make sure that we are indeed preparing our students for what they need to be prepared for when they leave high school.

Now that the new kindergarten and elementary curriculum is in place, we're continuing to phase in the new high school program over four years, taking it a step at a time, again, to respond to concerns that we've heard from teachers and parents about, if you will, slowing down or phasing in some of the changes. So we are indeed doing that in the high school curriculum. As I said, grades 11 and 12 are out earlier to give additional time.

I think it's important to note that throughout the curriculum and the new programs the emphasis is clearly where it should be: on science, technology, math, reading, writing, those literacy and numeracy skills that our students need; technology, as I mentioned, being taught in earlier grades. All of this is designed to help our students understand their community and their wider world in a much better fashion.

It's important also to recognize that for the first time, and coming at it in such a comprehensive way, each successive grade builds on what the students learned the year before, so that it flows much better than curriculum had many times in the past.

The new curriculum sets out consistent standards and clear expectations about what should be taught right across the province. So grade 11 and 12, as I mentioned, is already out. That's over a year ahead of when it's required for grade 11; two years for grade 12. This will certainly provide teachers with the lead time they need to prepare for the new curriculum.

One of the other messages we've heard is that teachers have requested that we expand teacher training in the new curriculum. For example, one of the great success stories has been the summer institutes that we've had this past summer. Over 9,000 teachers took part in summer institutes. These are jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the Ontario Teachers' Federation. We were oversubscribed last year and we doubled the number for this year. We were oversubscribed again so we're going to have to expand again. They were a wonderful opportunity for teachers this summer.

Over four years, we are providing \$370 million in training and resources to support the new curriculum.

The new curriculum sets higher standards for achievement by Ontario students, but I also recognize that simply setting higher standards does not meet our goals of quality education if we're not helping students to reach these levels of improvement. So, as I mentioned, we've committed an additional \$25 million in new money to help as many as 80,000 students in grades 7 to 10 improve their literacy and math skills, and also \$70 million of new money for literacy and other related skills for our junior kindergarten to grade 3 students, those very crucial early years.

In addition, we're implementing a grade 10 literacy test as part of our commitment to ensuring that our students have the literacy skills they need to compete in today's economy. This test is being phased in this school year. It will become a graduation requirement for the 2001-02 school year.



Also to help students, we have the teacher adviser program, assigning teachers to a small group of students. They hold regular meetings with them and with parents to help the students make good decisions about their education and long-term goals. This school year we've invested another \$64 million in new money to make this program a success.

Now that all the new curriculum is out, we are working to ensure better teaching of it and better learning of it. For example, in one of the steps we've taken to address the challenges of teaching the new curriculum in combined grades, we have what we call a curriculum partnership. It has representatives not only from the ministry but from the faculties of education and the Ontario Teachers' Federation. They are working on additional resources for teachers teaching combined grades in elementary levels. It is interesting to note, however, that the number of combined grades—and again, this is because of school construction, smaller class size and other factors—has decreased in the province. The curriculum partnership has identified the need for dedicated resources for teacher training to assist with teaching the new curriculum in the combined grades, so we are moving forward on doing that.

We are also providing school boards with \$14 million for teachers' professional development to assist them in implementing the new curriculum.

All of this, however, underlines the challenge and the importance of making sure all of our teachers stay as up-to-date as possible. While we certainly recognize and know that we have many excellent teachers—we've all seen the amazing work they do, both in our own lives and also for our children. The gift they give to students, encouraging academic excellence, personal discipline, good citizenship, for example—those are things that can influence us for the rest of our lives. But knowing that we have excellent teachers doesn't mean that we also don't need to do more on teacher training and steps to make sure that they are as up to date as they possibly can be and to make sure that we are ensuring teaching excellence.

1740

As promised, we have introduced the framework for the Ontario teacher testing program to ensure that all teachers have the best possible skills and training. We're now working with our education partners to put this program, as announced, in place.

For example, one of the steps that comes into effect this month: all new applicants seeking teacher certification in Ontario who obtained their training in a language other than English or French are required to pass an oral and written language proficiency test to ensure that they can communicate clearly in either English or French before they teach in Ontario.

Next fall teachers will be starting the recertification process that will be required every five years to ensure they are up to date in knowledge, skills and training. Teachers will be completing successfully a number of required courses, professional development activities etc.

This is based on a royal commission recommendation which all three parties supported. By next fall we'll have new province-wide standards to ensure that principals and school boards are evaluating and assessing teachers in a consistent manner across the province. An important improvement that will be made in this is that parents will also be given an opportunity to be involved in teacher evaluation, because their feedback is important as well.

In addition, we'll have a new certification review process to determine whether teachers who are unable to meet those standards and who are not able to be remediated, if you will, are not able to meet with extra help, should actually have their certification removed. Beginning in 2001-02, all new teachers will be required to pass a qualifying test, very much like a lawyer's bar exam, as a requirement for initial certification or licensing by the Ontario College of Teachers. This will help ensure that they know their curriculum subjects and have the necessary teaching skills before they enter the classroom.

Another improvement: we're working with our partners to design what is called an induction, or what I would call an internship program, very similar to what many doctors have gone through as interns, an opportunity for all new teachers to receive coaching and support from their more experienced colleagues. This is very much to ensure they get off to a very strong start at the beginning of their careers.

One of the other initiatives I'd like to touch on has to do with safe schools and recognizing that teachers can't teach and students can't learn if they're in fear for their safety. In too many classrooms that is still the case across the province. Last June the Legislature passed the Safe Schools Act, which includes the code of conduct. Earlier this month, new regulations under that legislation took effect to help make Ontario's schools safer and encourage an atmosphere that is more respectful and more conducive to learning.

The code sets out clear, consistent standards of behaviour. It sets out mandatory penalties for things like assaulting teachers, bringing drugs or weapons to school. It sets out clear consequences for students who are not meeting these standards. The code, with the other initiatives in place, will create a learning environment that can foster respect for others and can promote respect, responsibility and civility.

I also should point out that we want to make sure that we have programs for suspended or expelled students, strict discipline programs for those who require it and other programs for those who are suspended, so they can continue with their education and deal with whatever other problems they may well have.

I wish to conclude my introductory remarks. We certainly recognize that education today is not a luxury, it's a necessity, and that's why we've laid out the plans we have for education reform, which we are continuing to move forward to. I look forward to discussing these and the other issues more fully with my caucus colleagues and other members of the committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Madam Minister. The official opposition has 30 minutes in which to respond. Mr Kennedy?

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Minister, I'm willing to forgo most of my response if you're willing to answer questions. I'm wondering if you are.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I wonder if I can ask you a number of things in your statement that are contradictory. At least I would like, by making it interactive, to give you a chance to respond to that.

You talk about special education, for example. I know that through October, November and December of last year, when I asked you in the Legislature if there were problems in special education, you indicated there were none. Now you're saying that you're putting a certain amount of money into special education. You know that the directors of education, the superintendents, came back to you and said that you were actually putting less money into special education. You had an expert panel tell you that the prior expenditure of boards before your 1997 funding model was between \$1.3 billion and \$1.5 billion. You now claim to be putting in \$1.3 billion.

I want to know if you can tell us here in the little bit more time that this committee affords, are you funding special education in every school board more than it was before the new funding model? Can you make that assertion today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can certainly walk through school board by school board if you wish.

**Mr Kennedy:** No. I wondered, can you make that assertion or not?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** With all due respect, Mr Kennedy, you've asked me the question. First of all—

**Mr Kennedy:** But I don't want to waste time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I clearly flagged last year that special education was a problem that needed to be addressed. I spent considerable time consulting with our partners to see what was the best way to do that. We had recommendations that included not only more money but also different standards, so we've been moving forward on that. The superintendents' report that you were referring to was dealing with the top-ups that they as boards are providing to special needs, which they are certainly entitled to do. Some boards choose to top up. There are other boards that in the past—I'm not sure if it's the same this year but I know last year there had been some that had not used all of their resource. So they were talking about what they were topping up. So \$1.3 billion is more than what has been spent on special education before, and that's a province-wide number.

**Mr Kennedy:** Before 1997, though, Minister. Can you say categorically that what is being spent now on special education is more than before the new funding formula, and further—and I wish, if you could, you would attend to the question directly—more for each board that's out there? Can you give us that assurance here today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, as you know, we fund school boards based on enrolment, based on many other factors.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a per capita basis, that is.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So it is not fair or appropriate or accurate to try and use the figure in terms of school board by school board, because there are changes in their enrolment which may mean that their funding can change.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate that, but you've made this assertion a number of times without qualifying it. You've said time after time, "We're spending more money on special education than has ever been spent." You had an expert panel tell you, and you are aware of it, that that's not true. You had an expert panel tell you that the amount of money spent by prior boards was more than \$1.3 billion. It matters because the trickle-down effect is that kids out there aren't getting the attention they used to get before. I can give you hundreds of cases of kids who aren't getting the attention they used to get before. They want some kind of answer.

Minister, if you're not willing to generalize—outside of this forum you have said that. You say it's not fair to compare and so forth. What are you able to say about—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, no. Let's be clear about what I said. I have been very clear: \$1.3 billion is indeed more than has been spent on special education. If you look at numbers board by board, that can vary because the number of special needs students or enrolment can vary. But province-wide, and I always talk about it as province-wide, \$1.3 billion is more than has been spent before.

**Mr Kennedy:** Have you made your additional allocations of special education money now to all the boards?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Kennedy:** In other words, in August or September, I believe, the boards got the additional information.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, as a matter fact, in January boards knew that they were going to get at least as much money as they had had before in terms of the high-needs area. Shortly after the March grant regulation, they received information for the majority of the funding for special needs. They had their enrolment data. So they had a great deal of information, which is part of the normal course.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you just announced this new money, \$110 million you claim. That extra \$70 million and then a separate piece of \$40 million that you've talked about numerous times, has that all been distributed now to the boards? Do they all have that and could we have a list of which boards received the additional funding?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly. That's available. They have the money.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a minute, Mr Kennedy. It's \$140 million that has gone out to school boards.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm speaking specifically to the ISA and not the \$30 million for the other—



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, that's \$43 million. But you can't separate, because special needs money is not just ISA funding.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm going to come to that. I'm coming to that, because what many of the members here may or may not realize is the process that you've put in place, which has been called heinously bureaucratic by the teachers who go through it—we have a shortage of special-needs teachers. They are forced to take, in many cases, as much as a month away from their kids to meet your bureaucratic requirements. You require them to chase down specialists, which in northern and rural areas is very tough to do, by a certain date, and provide documentation. That documentation is then sent in to your ministry, where it is sampled—not rigorously gone through, necessarily, but sampled—by your staff to come up with an approval rating. Then the families and the teachers and the schools, who went through all that running around to fill in those applications, don't necessarily receive the money back, because you just give an approval rating back to the board.

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Even if that isn't in every detail—and I think it would be good if, for the purposes of the committee, some written description of that process were provided—can you tell us why, if you're not stapling the funding to the individuals, you waste everybody's time? That's what they're telling me. Every school I go to, that's what the parents, the teachers, the principals tell me, that you're wasting all their time doing these applications—because I guess fundamentally you don't trust the boards to spend the money here—when, in the final analysis, it doesn't matter to those individual kids. You, the ministry, don't guarantee that they get the money they filled in the application for. It creates a tremendous amount of frustration. It uses up a lot of resources.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, one of the reasons we are working so hard with the education partners here is to try and stop implementation that is not required by the ministry. For example, it is not required that every student have an annual assessment by a health professional. That is not required, and yet this year we had schools that were running around doing that and saying that it had to be done. That was not the case.

**Mr Kennedy:** For two years they've been doing that, or three.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Listen, I can only answer for the time that I have been part of that. They have not required an annual assessment for many things.

Secondly, the timing on this: school boards have known—this is the third year that we've had it the same time—when this process was. I know some school boards, for example, are starting to make sure that everything is ready now so you don't have this absolute silliness of having teachers taken out of a class for a month at a time. That is not because of any decision the ministry has made, because the deadline did not change.

**Mr Kennedy:** Just to clarify, Minister: are you saying something changed? When did that change? That's what happened this year. That's what happened this spring.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, it didn't happen in every school board, and secondly, I would say, as I have when I've met with school boards on a regular basis, "Look, the deadlines did not change." I had teachers, for example, who told me they were in an absolute panic because nobody on the board had bothered to tell them that they had a floor, that they were guaranteed a certain amount of funding. This particular board for some reason hadn't bothered to tell them. The boards knew that in January. There are a lot of implementation challenges that boards are having here that are not because the ministry has somehow made a wrong decision.

The other thing that's important here is that the recommendation of experts was that money for boards for special needs—they had to get it in two ways. They needed general money, and that's what they called a special grant, but you also needed—

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, Minister, I'm sorry. I want to give you the opportunity, but—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —special-needs money, and you needed some accountability for how that money—

**Mr Kennedy:** I understand, but you're getting a little further afield, although you did address some of my question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —was going to be allocated to the board. That's what was recommended to us.

**Mr Kennedy:** But the part that I really wish you would address is why you require all the individual assessments that you do. You're saying that maybe it doesn't have to be quite as rigorous, although you've got a lot of people out there who believe they are following ministry guidelines and are talking to ministry people all the time. That expenditure of precious energy is your ministry's responsibility.

What I'm asking you is—you are making them validate in a very negative way, often, the faults and problems of kids. You make them go through a significant process and then you do not reward that with specific funding for that child, and in fact you don't even look at all those documentations.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's exactly what school boards asked to have happen.

**Mr Kennedy:** Without interrupting, why don't you either match the funding, if that's the intent of the program and the process—because this is one of those things that makes people bang their head against the wall when it comes to dealing with government.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute before we wrap up.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, it was recommended to us by boards that we not—

**Mr Kennedy:** That doesn't make—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me finish the point. You've asked a question.

**Mr Kennedy:** I hope you answer it.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They said, “Do not Velcro the money to every kid. We need flexibility.” So this year, Mr Kennedy, that flexibility has been given to boards exactly as boards asked for it.

**Mr Kennedy:** They said that, Minister, because there wasn’t enough money.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If you’re now telling me they don’t want to do that, then that’s another issue, but we are doing what the school boards recommended we do.

**Mr Kennedy:** If you give them all the money that they qualify for, then it won’t matter.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They have flexibility.

Secondly, Mr Kennedy, they also have said to me, “You have to have a process for assessing high-needs students,” because that can be a significant financial pressure for a board. There has to be a way, an account-

able process. Parents want accountability, boards want accountability, so that’s also what we’ve responded to with that process.

If there are improvements that need to be made from this year, we’re quite prepared to do that again and we’ve already started those discussions with school boards.

**The Vice-Chair:** I was just enjoying this interaction. It’s so informative, you see. But we will adjourn now.

**Mr Kennedy:** I still have some more time left.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, the official opposition has about 16 minutes tomorrow as we resume immediately after orders of the day. I think that’s what it is.

**Mr Marchese:** Routine proceedings.

**The Vice-Chair:** Routine proceedings. We stand adjourned until tomorrow.

*The committee adjourned at 1756.*







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First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## **Assemblée législative de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

**Wednesday 27 September 2000**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

**Mercredi 27 septembre 2000**

## **Standing committee on estimates**

Ministry of Education

## **Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Éducation

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 27 September 2000

Mercredi 27 septembre 2000

*The committee met at 1640 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We'll resume the estimates for the Ministry of Education. When we recessed yesterday, Mr Kennedy had spoken for about 12 minutes of his 30. You may proceed now, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Minister, why don't we pick up where we left off talking about special education. One of the issues raised by many parents, teachers and particularly those specially trained teachers was the excessive amount of bureaucracy.

I want to draw your attention to some figures that have been collected by the Ontario Principals' Council. I'll be happy to provide this for copying for the whole committee. They say, as an estimate only, what percentage of time special education teachers spent last year on their total time assigned writing documents to obtain special education funding from the ministry: 0.0%-10%, 21%; 11%-20% of their time, 34%; 21%-30% of their time, 26%—26% of the teachers spent their time administering your ministry's documents—31%-40%, 10%; and 6%, probably in small schools where there are few of them, 41%-50% of their time.

I'm just wondering if I could obtain a commitment from you—and I think the sampling for this is about 230 schools. I'm not reporting this as the be-all answer, but I want to say to you, is this not a cause of great concern, if those numbers are anywhere near accurate, that somebody who's supposed to be in the classroom dealing with the neediest kids in school has to blow away their time, as a process I described before, not just on accountability but on what seems to be an excessive amount of paperwork and things that need to be done, and done every year, in order for those kids to get what they need?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** Thank you, Mr Kennedy, for the question. I certainly encourage the principals' council to use their network to produce data for us in a whole range of areas because I'm finding it extremely helpful.

We acknowledged, when I made the announcement in January of this year, that the process needed to be fixed and we took some steps this year to fix it. I'm the first to tell you I didn't need data from the principals' council to tell you that the job is not done. That's why we've set out

a three-year plan to fix that problem to strip out red tape and bureaucracy.

But at the same time I should also mention that special-needs students do take additional time. One of the things we ask the schools to do is an individual education plan for each special-needs student to make sure they're getting the supports and services they need. Yes, that is very time-consuming. That is something that principals, teachers and parents have very much said is a very important part of the supports for these students.

So are special-needs students time-consuming? Yes, they are. Do we need to make more changes to make sure the time that is being spent is productive in terms of support for the student and accountability to parents, school boards and taxpayers? Absolutely. We'll continue to do what we said we would do.

**Mr Kennedy:** Can I make a specific recommendation, Minister, and see how you respond to it? Can we accept that we should reverse these ratios? Rather than having 20% of teachers spending 10% or less of their time on documentation and 80% spending above 10%, shouldn't we make sure that 90% of these people who are counted as classroom people are actually in the classroom with those special-needs kids, using their training for that? Could there be some kind of goal that we could adopt and help arrange?

I don't want to question three-year plans and so on at this moment. I would like to believe there were steps; you said there were some in January. This is a report of what actually happened this year. Doesn't it make sense, intuitively, that 10% should be a maximum of the time that these teachers should have to detract from their learning and be able to meet whatever stringent criteria for accountability you might come up with?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all I'm a little surprised that Mr Kennedy, who just in the House within the last two hours criticized me for setting an instructional time standard for teachers in the classroom, is now asking me to set an additional standard for special-needs students in telling teachers how much time they should spend in serving the needs of special-needs students. Do we want the process to be streamlined? Absolutely, because we don't want teachers spending time or anyone in the board spending time that is not productive on the process that needs to support this funding.

I'm sure the honourable member will agree. I have not heard any complaint from school boards or principals

when we've been working together to solve this issue. They all agree that we need to have an accountability process to make sure that the money is going for those students and that it is being well used. The question and the challenge for all of us who are working on this problem is to make sure that process provides accountability in as streamlined a fashion as possible. But no, I will not be going out setting standards that say a teacher should spend only this amount of time on a particular special-needs student. They are labour-intensive students, and they require an incredible commitment. The special-needs teachers who do this job are incredibly committed in terms of the time they put into it, and those students benefit from it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you misunderstand. What I was hoping you would adopt as a goal for your ministry was that you would streamline your bureaucracy so the net result would be that they wouldn't need to spend 10%. I don't at all recommend that you do the other.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we are going to streamline.

**Mr Kennedy:** But let me go to a specific question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I just said we agreed there is a problem—

**Mr Kennedy:** But you didn't adopt the target, and I appreciate it's your prerogative not to adopt the target if you don't wish to.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and we're working very hard to fix it, because we know those teachers don't need to waste their time.

**The Vice-Chair:** Can we just have one. Hold on. Wait. May I get some order here.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, a specific—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, may I have an exchange with one person speaking at a time?

**Mr Kennedy:** Absolutely, Mr Chair. Your discretion.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly, Mr Chair. Apologies.

**The Vice-Chair:** Good.

**Mr Kennedy:** When the people coming from Bloorview MacMillan School Authority go back to regular school, they're in that special authority. They've been documented like crazy to be there. When they go back to regular school, they have to go through another process that takes several months. They've got several students who aren't going to get to regular school till November because of your process. In the spirit of what we've been talking about, would you commit to solving that problem, to make sure those kids don't have to sit out of school at Bloorview MacMillan from September to November because of the paperwork your ministry is requiring?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, our ministry is not requiring paperwork before students are allowed to come into a classroom and get the education they deserve. There is nothing where this ministry is saying, "Let that kid sit at home because somebody hasn't finished the paperwork." That is abominable, and if that is happening in a school, I want to hear about it.

**Mr Kennedy:** You're hearing about it, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have been very clear with boards: whatever process has to be followed for accountability to parents and taxpayers for use of money is never to be used to prevent a student from getting the educational services they need. That is the ministry policy. If there are some schools or some boards that are having difficulty implementing that, let's talk about those so we can solve it.

If there are children whose condition—if you will, whose challenge, whose exceptionality—is not going to change, it's a lifelong exceptionality, once that child has entered the school system, that documentation is there. There is no need to endlessly repeat that documentation process. That's one of the things we are working on with the school boards, principals, special-needs teachers and the advisory council I have of representatives with special-needs students, so we can prevent those kinds of things from happening. That's not what—

**Mr Kennedy:** Would you undertake to look into this situation for Bloorview MacMillan? These kids are not getting into school because the boards don't have the resources to accommodate these kids. They want the documentation to be able to appeal for extra resources. That's what's happening here. It's a stalemate.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, it's not.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm accepting you at your word.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm quite happy to look into it, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** At the same time, Minister, Bloorview MacMillan also has a problem they would like your assistance with. The equipment they have, they can't apply for. I know your ministry isn't directly involved with the special-needs equipment they have until they get into the school. There's a jurisdictional issue there, and I hope your staff can look into it. They find themselves having to reapply for equipment that would accommodate the kids in school, as opposed to what they got in the facility.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be quite happy to look into that.

**Mr Kennedy:** The other questions I have for you at this moment are about your advertising program. I'd like to talk to you about your ministry advertising program, the money you're spending to communicate and persuade Ontarians about what is happening in your ministry. You have television ads, you have a door-to-door piece that you've produced. I wonder if you could tell us precisely how much money you're spending on each of those campaigns? What is your budget for this year? Will we see more ads, and what did they cost? How much of your budget are you spending on advertising right now? What is your total budget for the whole year, and can we get specific numbers on the campaigns you've done and that you're planning to undertake?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The spring and fall information campaigns were \$3,930,000. I make no apologies for communicating with parents. That's one of the things I said, when I was sworn in as minister, that I would do and continue to do: take every opportunity, whether it's



letters, whether it's special mailings, whether it's householders, whether it's radio or television advertising. I want to use all the tools that in the modern age we have available to us to communicate more with parents, because that's what parents have said they want. We need more information so they can judge for themselves. I respect the fact that they will make that judgment as to whether they agree or disagree with the information they're receiving, and I see that as a very serious obligation I have as an elected official, as you do, Mr Kennedy, in communicating as well.

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**Mr Kennedy:** The second part of the question, Minister: how much are you planning to spend for the rest of the year? How much have you budgeted? We're here approving estimates. Where in the estimates is this coming from, and how much money have you put aside for the purpose of advertising?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we don't put aside money for advertising. It's part of our communications expenditures.

**Mr Kennedy:** Where will we find that in estimates, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'll let Mr Peebles, our assistant deputy minister—I'm not sure on what line we'd find communications expenditures, but it certainly should be included as part of communications. We don't set aside special monies, if you will, because to us communications, whether it's a news release, whether it's a householder, whether it's a letter I send back to a parent, that's all part of our communications budgets, as it should be.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate that. Minister, I would like to know the specific part. Where will we find the advertising, the media buying and that kind of thing you're doing on behalf of your ministry?

**Mr Ross Peebles:** I'm Ross Peebles, the assistant deputy minister of corporate management. Mr Kennedy, the total advertising numbers for the ministry are in a number of places. One of the places is in the communications budget that is part of the ministry administration program.

**Mr Kennedy:** I see transportation and communications, page 19.

**Mr Peebles:** Yes, some of it is in there.

**Mr Kennedy:** It speaks to \$900,000.

**Mr Peebles:** No, some of it is there.

**Mr Kennedy:** Where's the rest?

**Mr Peebles:** Some of it is in supplies and equipment, which is underneath, and services, which are a line below. That's some of it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Where else?

**Mr Peebles:** There's some additional money in the program.

**Mr Kennedy:** Which program?

**Mr Peebles:** The program is on page 31.

**Mr Kennedy:** Page 31, thank you.

**Mr Peebles:** And it occurs in part of the supplies and equipment money that's there.

**Mr Kennedy:** So under transport and communications?

**Mr Peebles:** It's part of the transportation and communications.

**Mr Kennedy:** So money, in other words, about elementary and secondary delivery is spent on advertising.

**Mr Peebles:** Some of it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Some of it. Can you give us a breakdown? How much of it comes out of that line?

**Mr Peebles:** Well, the minister has given you the breakdown for the expenditures.

**Mr Kennedy:** The minister provided me with \$3,930,000 for the spring and fall. I want to know what winter and summer are going to bring us. What are you, for a full year, going to spend on advertising?

**Mr Peebles:** We haven't got an amount set aside at the moment for that.

**Mr Kennedy:** This is a point of accountability. We're here on behalf of the taxpayers looking for accountability. You're spending money. Who decides? I'm going to ask this question very directly, because if it was partisan advertising, if it was advantaging the government party, it still has to be signed off by the bureaucracy. So you should have a plan by now, the esteemed public servants who run this ministry, to spend this money. Certainly this can't just sit there subject to political direction. So there must be a budget. Are you saying there will be no more spending for the rest of the year?

**Mr Peebles:** No.

**Mr Kennedy:** Who decides that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, what happens in part of the estimates process, as you know, is that there is a certain amount of money set aside for communications, as we have. Sometimes it gets broken out with equipment and whatever, and that's part of the communications budget. So part of that money over the course of a year—no one starts off at the beginning of the year; you don't start off at the beginning of your caucus communications budget and say, "We're going to spend X amount of money sending out news releases and X amount of money travelling."

**Mr Kennedy:** No, I don't need that level of detail. Can I be more specific, then, to help you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a minute. Let me finish the question, please. You've asked me a question. So there is a macro amount for communications, and within that allocation the government makes decisions about where we allocate the dollars, whether it's press releases, whether it's letters to school councils. I send copies of material to school councils. We make those decisions within that budget. So the taxpayers can be very clear about what the budget is that's available.

**Mr Kennedy:** Let me just tell you, a problem I have on behalf of the taxpayers, Minister, is that it starts to look like you've got a slush fund for advertising drawn from different accounts, because in 1998-99 media buying services, clearly media advertising purchases, were



\$7.8 million and yet your budget line doesn't support that. Your budget lines you've identified so far, combined, don't support that.

I want to come back to another question: if there can be a one-page summary of where the advertising money for last year and this year came from so we can know, people of this committee can know, where the advertising dollars are being pulled out of. I would also then like to know who approves that. What part of your ministry determines where that money is spent in terms of these overall campaigns that cost us four million bucks? Where is that approval coming from? Who in the ministry, in particular, signs off on that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we'd be quite prepared to provide information on past campaigns or past information activities that may well have happened, but I would also like to ease your mind that in the budgets for school boards, the budgets that go out, there is not one dollar that is taken away from those budgets for any communication activities to parents that we undertake.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I think that that and your control of things may be a bit subjective. You've taken away a lot of money from school boards whether it's affected that or not, but I would very much then—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. We are spending more today on school boards than we were in 1995, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll accept you again, as I must, and I have no problem accepting you at your word, Minister, but I will then look forward to receiving, at your earliest convenience, a breakdown of where the advertising bucks are being drawn out of the ministry. And because I didn't get an answer about the identification of the approvals process in the ministry which is of interest, and I will state my interest very directly, I want to be assured that there is no political interference. If these are truly provided in the public interest, then I'm concerned for the integrity of the people who have to make those decisions, that they aren't compelled by some outside influence to spend that money.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I'd be quite happy to get for you the procedures that Management Board lays down for the purchase or acquisition of services for communication so that we can ease your mind and you can be assured that appropriate procedures are followed. It's certainly my understanding that they have been, and if they're not, I would certainly be interested in taking steps to ensure that those appropriate procedures are followed.

**Mr Kennedy:** All right. I'd like to ask you, Minister, about something that I will spend some additional time on shortly, but I want to ask you right now because you may have this really quite readily available: how much money would it cost you and us in the Ontario provincial government to go to six out of eight in the schools? How much money are you saving by going to 6.5 and, conversely, how much money would it cost to have six out of eight as the standard in the schools?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, we're not saving anything, because all of that money is in the

system. We pay school boards according to a whole range of standards that are set, including an instructional time for teachers. If a school board were to decide that their teachers would work—to use the rather arcane formula that has come into common usage in this discussion—if a school board in their negotiations with the union were to use a six out of eight as opposed to a 6.5, they would have to find that money from another budget and in some cases, the Thames Valley board for example, it was very clear they subsidized the lower workload standard by taking money from the textbook fund. We believed, very clearly, that was not appropriate—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Listen, Mr Kennedy, you asked the question, so we—

**Mr Kennedy:** But I'm not hearing a number and, with respect, I only have a certain amount of time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a second—so we set a standard and we were very clear about that standard, because we don't think it's appropriate to take money from another fund to put it in.

**Mr Kennedy:** But you're the minister. Surely you know what that means in terms of dollars. How much difference, if you say you're forcing boards to cannibalize to do that—you approved all those contracts a few years ago or your predecessor did, so how much—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I didn't. No, Mr Kennedy, we're not forcing boards to—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to rephrase my question, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a second, Mr Chair. There's something here that's inaccurate on record. We are not forcing boards to cannibalize to subsidize the workload of teachers.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, there isn't a qualitative difference—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We put a stop to that, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** —and I want it quantitatively. You have the array here of talented people who run the ministry. Surely they know how much money it would cost to allow the boards to go to a six of eight standard without cannibalizing any of the other funds. What's the cost?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we can certainly get you some direct numbers about what that would cost if we were to go back to that. That cost would have to be taken out of another budget within the education ministry if we were to do that. That's why we think it's important to set clearly where we are funding—

**Mr Kennedy:** Or you could put some more money in the ministry. You could put some money—

**The Vice-Chair:** Your time is up, Mr Kennedy.

Mr Marchese, you have 30 minutes in which to deliver your comments to the minister's opening remarks.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Madam Minister, I'm going to ask for your indulgence and your co-operation because there are a lot of questions. If your answers are long, I'm going to make a speech for 30

minutes. If your answers are short, then I can continue to ask questions. There's no other way that I see us proceeding in this matter.

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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Since we enjoy hearing you speak, I don't think that's a threat.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no. I know you love to speak too, so my point is, if I get short answers to my questions, then I'll continue asking them. If not, I'll just make a speech, and I'll ask the questions and answer myself.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You're very good.

**Mr Marchese:** You're good.

**The Vice-Chair:** After the complimentary remarks, can we get into it?

**Mr Marchese:** There are times when I will have statements and times when I will have questions. First a statement on this issue of how much money we spend on communicating—not publicity, not selling ourselves—on communicating. I've got no problem with that. We were in government, the Liberals were in government. We all spend money to do that. It's really very difficult to find the money. It's really not easy to say, as the assistant deputy said, "It's here and here." It's everywhere, because it's buried everywhere. You're never going to find it. I've got no problem with that, because everybody does it, every government does it—to communicate.

I recall our Premier when we used to say to him, "Premier, you've got to communicate directly with the public." He did once, where he paid I think it was \$50,000 for a Global program for half an hour. We said, "You've got to communicate directly with the public." We don't get help from the media, as you know. So we said, "We'll get an unfiltered message. We'll pay the money, and you say what you want so that people can hear you clearly instead of the filter that we get from the Sun"—because they were friends, as you know—the National Post, the Star, which helps the Liberals, and the Globe.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We haven't got one for you. We'll have to do something about that.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, you've got to help out. We can't do this alone. You know that, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's right, you can't.

**Mr Marchese:** The problem is that the Tories used to attack us all the time about how much money we were spending. Mike Harris led me to believe—I don't know about the others. Some of you weren't here; most of you weren't here, in fact, except a couple. Mike Harris led me to believe he was going to be different, because he said so. He wasn't going to spend the kind of dollars that the NDP spent or certainly the Liberals. Good God, no, he was going to be different.

**Mr Kennedy:** You mean the old Liberals.

**Mr Marchese:** The old Liberals, of course, because the new Liberals are different.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Oh, we've got old Liberals and new Liberals. I missed that. Thank you.

**Mr Marchese:** The new Liberals wouldn't spend a cent, I know that. But Harris wasn't going to spend as

much as the New Democrats. So he stood up the other day and said, "We've spent a couple of bucks," and, "Oh no, none of our ads is partisan." That's what I resent. Just say it. Say you're spending the bucks to communicate, to manufacture consent. Just say it. But I've got to tell you, to end my statement, I trust the public. I trust the public, in the end, to decide whether or not you're using their money to communicate fairly or not. In the end, I know they'll know. So I don't bother trying to dig for this information buried in that assistant deputy minister's file, which is quite thick. I don't know if the public can see that, but it's big.

Moving on: on the issue of special ed, just one question. I recall your answers to questions about increasing special ed and Gerard making mention of the report saying that we're short \$140 million. I've got to tell you, you almost mockingly used to say, "What short fund? We have given what people wanted. They said these were the needs. This is what we've given. There is no shortfall." I remember you saying that clearly. We don't have the resources for me to get Hansard, but I can quickly get it if we have to. But you always used to deny there was a funding problem in relation to special ed, always.

A couple of months ago you announced \$70 million, \$40 million—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's \$140 million additional.

**Mr Marchese:** —\$140 million eventually, which is what the superintendents were saying we were short. My point is that you denied it. Can I ask you, is that true? Do you deny that you denied it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. What I said, if you'll recall and if you'll go back—and I'm sure we can check the Hansard at some point just to make sure all of our memories as we get older are not as faulty as they sometimes are, for you and I and Gerard. But the claim, as I recall it, was that superintendents were—he was using the information to say that we had cut special education that amount of money. That I deny. We did not cut special education funding.

What the superintendents' report was stating was that they were topping up what we were providing them with a particular amount. So not surprisingly, they, as superintendents have always done, are lobbying the ministry for additional funds. I had said to all of our partners that I was quite happy to provide additional funds if we felt there was the need. We gave a 12% increase, and for the third year in a row there's been an increase because we did know there was additional need.

**Mr Marchese:** There was no denial. The question was, "You cut," and you said, "No, we didn't." They said, "We need \$140 million," and eventually you listened and said, "That's right."

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually, if you listen to your Liberal colleague, it ranged a lot, from \$140 million to \$200 million to \$300 million. I was never quite sure what the Liberals were asking for.



**Mr Marchese:** Right, but at the time it was \$140 million. Do you know what, between me and you, Janet, Madam Minister? I'm going to get those questions—

**The Vice-Chair:** Keep that up; I like the first-name basis.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course; we're friends from time to time.

**The Vice-Chair:** I know that.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm going to get that Hansard because I really was interested in hearing your answers to all of those questions. But there's no point in disputing the nuance of what he said and what you said; I just remember a denial. But we'll move on.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It wasn't a cut. Do we need more? Yes. We've provided more, and if we think we need to do it again, we'll do it again.

**Mr Marchese:** Do we need more? Yes. I never heard you say once, "We need more," never once in all of the answers to anybody's questions, "Yes, we need more"—never, except you delivered eventually, which leads me to believe you knew more money needed to have been put in.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, one of the things I said when I first became minister and met with all my partners was, "What are your priorities we need to fix?" They said special needs, so we launched a three-year plan to do that.

**Mr Marchese:** They told you, and you delivered—no problem.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm quite prepared to accept advice from our education partners.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course—I know, I hear you—except when opposition members ask those questions and we don't get the kind of answers—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I didn't see you on the list of our education partners, but I'd be glad to investigate that.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, please.

In your comments yesterday you were talking about, "To address the challenges of teaching the new curriculum in combined grades," you were working with a "curriculum partnership," which is made up of reps from the ministry, the faculties of ed, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, to name a few. I'm not going to ask you, because it would probably take a long time, probably five minutes of my time and yours, to tell me what you're doing with respect to curriculum partnership, but I'm assuming it's a good thing. You don't say what it is, but I'm assuming it's a very good thing.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's a very good thing, and we and the teachers' unions and all of our partners are working together on it.

**Mr Marchese:** I know. I didn't ask a question yet. Let me move on to the next one.

"It is interesting to note that the number of combined grades has decreased in all regions of the province over the past three years." Are you familiar with how many students are in combined grades either in the Catholic board or the public board?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That statement is based on the data that we've received from school boards. When the elementary teachers' federation raised the concern—

**Mr Marchese:** I believe that it's dropped. Do you know the number?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —we went out and did the data, and it does show that there's actually been in the last couple of years a decrease in the combined grades. But I also said that we still have—

**Mr Marchese:** A way to go.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —an issue that we need to address with teachers to help them deal with combined grades.

**Mr Marchese:** I agree with you. I read a statistic from a separate school document which said that 40% of their students are in combined classes. It's a phenomenal figure. Are you familiar with that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Not that particular figure, no, but if you have a question about data we can certainly take a look at that.

**Mr Marchese:** Assistant Deputy, are you familiar with that figure? No? It's incredible. I assume it to be true. Why else would these publications say that? But if it is true, do you think it's a real problem?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Combined grades have always existed in Ontario since the first one-room schoolhouse had all eight grades in it. So combined grades are not new. Why they're more of an issue today than they were previously is because, of course, the new curriculum is more rigorous, it is more challenging to teach it with a split grade. That's why we have invested additional money for smaller classes in the elementary, because that allows school boards to perhaps minimize that. We're also investing in more teacher training and more curriculum supports for teachers who have combined grades.

I should also say, because I know that some unions have taken the position that we should ban combined grades, that if we ban combined grades it means in smaller communities those schools would cease to function or have to be closed, because in many communities you don't have enough students to make up a whole class, or whatever. So the system continues to need combined grades for flexibility, but teachers need more support.

**Mr Marchese:** No problem at all. I agree that combined grades have existed. I just believe that there has probably been an increase. But that figure is astounding and we need to deal with it. I'm suggesting to you that we need to deal with it. Providing curriculum support or partnership I think is good. I'm not sure what else you're offering.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** More money for smaller classes and more support.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me get to the small classes because it very much connects. But on the issue of combined classes, they've existed; I'm not sure eliminating them is the answer to that problem. But that there are problems with teachers teaching combined classes is serious. You have a job on your hands, you and your ministry, in terms of helping out.



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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But just to be clear—and we'll certainly be prepared to take a look at the information you have—when we went to school boards just this year, I asked the question. The elementary teachers were saying it was a problem, so I said, "What's happening?" The data we received from school boards showed that in the last two or three years—I'm not sure when they started—

**Mr Marchese:** There's been a decrease. I heard you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But I agree it's still an issue we have to deal with.

**Mr Marchese:** Obviously, you included it in the report because you must have felt it was serious enough to talk about it, and that's why I raised the question. I'm saying that, yes, it is serious. I think a lot more work needs to be done. Whether it's just curriculum partnership, that might be one answer. Obviously, reducing class size is the other, and I want to get to that by way of a question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Do you have any other recommendations you'd like to make on this?

**Mr Marchese:** That's what we pay you to look at. The opposition, of course, raises questions—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I just thought I'd offer.

**Mr Marchese:** —but usually ministers come up with solutions, and then we debate them and say "good" or "bad." Sometimes you don't listen to our suggestions anyway, so what's the point of raising them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be quite happy to listen to yours on combined grades.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll remember that.

Yesterday you admitted there is a disturbing trend toward increasing class size. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, one of the education partners you constantly cite, has been warning you about this for some time. Do you agree it's a disturbing trend?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's why we've taken the series of steps we have: first of all, to try to stop the trend and then start trying to bring it down. I suggest that job is not yet done.

**Mr Marchese:** In the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario pre-budget brief, you were shown that JK to Grade 2 classes have increased between 9% and 14%. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the reasons we brought in Bill 160 two years ago was to set, for the first time ever, an average class size cap. That had not been there before. We brought that number down again this spring in Bill 74. We put more money, \$263 million, out there that is in the school system this year for smaller classes and, also through Bill 74, we're asking boards to report on it so we get better data about what is happening. If it isn't—and you'll hear many teachers in some schools question whether a particular board is doing what they should be doing on class size—we will be able to get the data. We also now have the ability to take action if a board isn't doing what they should be doing.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. You must have heard about the report they published, "How the government used its new funding formula to short-change our children's future." The report says this about your funding of education, because you always say you've given more, which is what you just said.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The numbers show we give more.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, of course. "The details of the funding formula may have been developed to justify spending cuts. The details actually underline the need for additional funding from the system. Class size is an example of one area in which education is getting worse."

We are seriously concerned, because under our government, class size was much better. You'll say differently. With your funding formula, things have gotten worse. Class sizes in the elementary level have gone up, in spite of the fact that you say they ought to have gone down.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If school boards are indeed doing that, they are breaking the law. If they are breaking the law, then we now have, first of all, the ability to determine that. There's no question that we have lots of anecdotal comments from people about what they think is happening. While that is very useful information, we also need data. Through our legislation, we have the ability to track that, to ask boards to report on what is happening.

It's the same thing with combined grades. I know one of the unions says, "Well, we should just set every class size." Again, I don't think that's appropriate. What is appropriate for, say, a small group of students with learning disabilities is a very different number than might well be required for a different kind of class.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand that. That has always been the case.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So flexibility is required. But the school boards are cashing the taxpayers' cheques to meet those class size standards. If they are not meeting that, we want to know so we can take appropriate action.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate that. We have a profound difference of opinion, of course, because you keep saying there is more money and we keep saying there is less. Federations keep saying there is less and teachers experience that, and you keep saying there is more.

I'm glad to hear you saying you're going to collect data, because often you dispute everybody else's data. Parents collect data, teachers collect data, superintendents collect data, and it's always disputed. I'm happy that you are collecting data, because then we can compare yours and everybody else's. I'm glad you're doing it, because then we can talk about it. Otherwise, you're always disputing everybody else's data.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, no. I think there's some data that's been very helpful and very useful to us.

**Mr Marchese:** Then tell us when that is so, because you always deny that that data is useful.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I am quite prepared to take a look at many of the reports that are done on a regular basis by many groups in education.

**Mr Marchese:** I know. On the question of Bill 74, there are a number of issues. You and your government have often talked about contact time, that teachers need to have more contact time with the students. My assumption about that expression is that it really means more remedial help. Usually when I hear "contact time" it means remedial help to me. Is that what you mean when you say we want teachers to have more contact time with students?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We certainly included remediation specifically as part of the classroom time standard. But I think one of the other things we should be clear about is that a teacher's activities in a school do not start or end with the classroom. This government has never taken any position other than to recognize that. Contact time is something that can happen formally in a classroom; it's something that can happen informally as part of all kinds of out-of-class activities teachers do. Remediation, for example, is one of the important priorities we have. That's why we've put in new money specifically for remediation and specifically recognize it as part of the calculation for classroom time.

**Mr Marchese:** I hear you. How much time is that? Could you break it down for me so people who are watching know?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we were very up front that as part of the classroom standard, to make it more flexible for the school boards and the unions to implement that standard, we have included remediation time. It works out to approximately half an hour a week in terms of the actual standard that's part of the classroom standard. But I also hasten to add that we recognize the reason we did that was because teachers told us they were doing significant remediation work anyway outside of class. It helped make it more flexible for the boards by officially recognizing some of that as part of the instructional time standard.

**Mr Marchese:** No problem. I think it's a good thing. You probably would agree that a half-hour per week is not much.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, but that's not the limit.

**Mr Marchese:** Right, because the limit would be outside of classroom time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, what a student requires may vary. Some need some; some need none.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Again, our education partners were very clear that they needed that flexibility. But we also heard they needed more support, because obviously that takes teacher time and we recognized that. So \$25 million of additional new money was specifically targeted for that.

**Mr Marchese:** That part is fine. For the sake of people listening, that time amounts to about a half-hour a week, it's 1% or 1.5%.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's 0.17.

**Mr Marchese:** Right, 1.7%, about a half-hour per week instructional time.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But the other thing too—and I know there's some confusion—is that that by no means dictates how a teacher engages in their day.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. You mean during lunch, maybe, that kind of thing?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** During the school day. Again, it depends on how the union and the board have implemented many of the policies.

**Mr Marchese:** That's what they were trying to do in Durham. Let me get to that, because I've got a number of questions in this area. They needed to have your understanding of what you meant by contact time. What we see from Bill 74 is that contact time means that teachers are now saddled with an extra period a year. Seven out of eight is essentially what it means now. It's an extra period.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, it doesn't have to mean seven out of eight. We set a standard that calculates, as a board-wide average, four hours and 10 minutes a day for a secondary teacher. That's more than what elementary teachers do. It's also a standard that is set on the national average, so there are provinces across the country doing more than that.

**Mr Marchese:** I know. But my question—Minister, please.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** How that is translated, though, is between the school board and the union. We do not say, "Thou shalt teach one class or two classes."

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, you changed the instructional time from 1,000—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, four hours and 10 minutes; we haven't changed that.

**Mr Marchese:** —to a new definition of 6.6.

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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, it's still four hours and 10 minutes a day. It's explained differently because school boards and federations told us that the mistake we had made before was that we hadn't been clear about how we defined it.

**Mr Marchese:** Now you're much clearer. You've done a good job of making it clear.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And credits are how they organized the time for teachers, so that's why it's articulated as credits. The time expired is not more. We are not asking teachers to do more than what has been in place for a couple of years.

**Mr Marchese:** So with Bill 74, what I am asking you to answer is, are teachers being required to teach longer than previously, than prior to Bill 74?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. Bill 160 has—the standard is four hours and 10 minutes. That is the same standard. It was articulated in Bill 74 in a different way so it was clear, because what we heard when I did my first round of consultations this last year, first year as minister, was that we hadn't been clear and that it was—

**Mr Marchese:** I heard that and the audiences watching heard that.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's why we used that particular definition.

**Mr Marchese:** That's fine, Minister. For clarity, you're saying Bill 74 does not impose on the school system or teachers any additional workload. That's what you just said.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It hasn't changed from the Bill 160 standard, no.

**Mr Marchese:** So from Bill 160 to Bill 74, teachers are upset for some reason—these unions, sorry, not teachers. These unions are so upset that somehow teachers are being required to teach longer and, good God, they don't understand that they don't have to teach any more than before because it's the same standard as Bill 160. That's what you're saying, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It is the same standard as Bill 160, but the difficulty is that it was applied very differently from school board to school board. Some teachers said to us that was unfair, many school boards said to us that we had to have a clear instructional time standard, and we took great care in setting that standard two years ago—three years ago, actually, to be perfectly—

**Mr Marchese:** I understand very clearly, and the public does too, and the teachers watching are understanding very clearly too. This is my knowledge of it: teachers will have an extra class to teach. That will increase their contact to at least 20 more students per day.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It depends, Mr Marchese, on how it's implemented.

**Mr Marchese:** To get back to contact time, that means the time they might have had to be able to spend with students who need help—they won't be getting it. That time that they're now obliged to teach, through Bill 74, means they won't have time for preparation, they won't have time to work with students who might need extra remedial assistance, and they won't have time to prepare for the extracurricular activities that people did. That's my understanding. How do you see it again, so that those listening will know?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, that four hours and 10 minutes a day is based on what teachers across the country do. Again, we're only talking high school, because elementary teachers already work more than that in terms of the actual classroom time.

The other thing about the extra class—again, just to talk about one of the boards in my community—in a semester system there are five periods in the day, as I understand it, one for lunch, and every second year for one semester, so it's not for the complete year; one semester every second year a teacher would teach four out of those five; in the other three semesters during that two-year period they would be teaching three out of the five. That's how one board that I'm aware of implemented that standard. One of the reasons that we changed to recognize remediation time, teacher adviser time in the definition, was to provide some additional flexibility, because for some teachers a four-out-of-four workload may well be, depending on the course they teach, very arduous.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate your comments, Minister. I know that where teachers have taught an extra period last year, in Durham and other places, they were extremely exhausted. You might say they don't work a lot anyway, an extra period, more contact time—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've never said that, Mr Marchese—

**Mr Marchese:** No, of course, you wouldn't say that like that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —because I don't believe that.

**Mr Marchese:** The problem is that, where teachers have been obliged to teach an extra period, they've been terribly exhausted. When that happens, teachers can't teach very well and their effectiveness is lost. So what you are trying to accomplish is in fact contradicted; you get the opposite of what you wanted.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But why, Mr Marchese—

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, no, no. I've got the floor. Please. I haven't asked you a question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Sorry.

**Mr Marchese:** So that's really what happens when you do that. In spite of what you're trying to do, which in my view is highly political, because what you're trying to do is to divide the general public from the federations, from the unions, from the teachers, and you're hoping that will stick—the polls show it isn't, so I don't know what you're going to do. But that's the politics of it. You are picking on them, as you picked on welfare recipients, and hoping the public will back you up, and I don't believe the backing is there. That's the politics of it.

Bill 74, in part, before I get to some other questions, assuming there's time, obliges teachers to teach an extra period in one year, obliges them to teach 20 more students per day. That means their contact time with students is less. It also means, based on the calculations that have been done by the secondary federation, that there will be about 2,000 teachers lost, pushed out, because they won't be needed. If the same number of teachers are teaching more students, then teachers have to be let go; they have to be fired. That's what I'm trying to get at.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's a valid point, and that's one of the reasons we invested \$163 million in high school, because we heard the concern about job loss. That was not something we wanted to see. So the \$163 million for the secondary panel and setting smaller class size for the secondary panel means that schools require additional teachers because of that. We didn't want to have some sort of massive job loss. That's not our aim here.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, you've got two minutes more to go.

**Mr Marchese:** I've never heard you once in the Legislature say that you heard where they were concerned about job losses. Never once, except today, did you say you've heard—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If you'll check the record, I've certainly said it in media scrums and whatever. I don't know if I've said it in the Legislature or not, but I've certainly said it in public speeches and in the media.



**Mr Marchese:** Madam Minister, the only place that I hear you is in the Legislature and here. You never once admitted there would be job losses.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I didn't say there would be. I said we heard of concerns—

**Mr Marchese:** But that's why you put money—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a minute. We heard a concern that there might be. We wanted to ensure that did not occur. We also knew that people—

**Mr Marchese:** But, Janet, the point I'm making—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—parents and teachers, want smaller class size, so that's why we made that investment.

**Mr Marchese:** Janet, please. Madam Minister, I've got the floor.

I'm saying, like the federations, that jobs would be lost, that more teachers are teaching more students, as a result of which teachers would be fired, approximately 2,000 of them. You knew that. That which you call "more contact time"—that's the politics of the language that you hoped would reach the parents. But you knew—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I never used "contact time."

**Mr Marchese:** You knew you would save approximately—well, I don't know how many millions you'd save, but there are 2,000 people who have to be let go. Then you announce, gallantly, you're going to put some more money back into the secondary system to reduce class size on the basis that you've already taken—you're going to lose 2,000. You're going to put some money back, and who knows how many with that inclusion of the extra dollars.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But, Mr Marchese, that investment came with Bill 74.

**Mr Marchese:** No, that investment came with taking teachers out, because 2,000 or so would be lost, and then you invested some more dollars, so-called new dollars, which you took from the people who would be fired.

That's the final statement I will make for the day.

**The Vice-Chair:** We will ask the Progressive Conservative side, the government side, to respond, and I heard you had a request here.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Chair, we would like unanimous consent to have our 30 minutes deferred until Tuesday. The minister could do a wrap-up today. As you are probably aware, the minister is unable to be here next Tuesday, due to a provincial education conference. If we could have unanimous consent, then the minister could do her wrap-up today and we would defer our question period until Tuesday.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm not here on Tuesday because of the conference, but I'd be happy to do it on the Wednesday if we wanted.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: There is only 30 minutes for either the governing party to be involved or for the minister, not both. There's only one.

**The Vice-Chair:** The government party has 30 minutes and the minister has 30 minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** No. For the estimates, the rules of order are that there's only each party. The minister has had her opening, but traditionally the minister will use the final

party time to give her response, if you look in the orders. We could maybe ask the clerk to check that, but that is my understanding. Normally you give that to the minister; that's what usually happens.

1730

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Chair, could I make a comment? The minister said that she would be happy to come back Wednesday.

**The Vice-Chair:** Just a minute. I want to clarify the facts about this 30 minutes first, because what I'm understanding here is that there are 30 minutes with each side, and as soon as those 30 minutes are wrapped up, the minister has 30 minutes to respond. Mr Kennedy is questioning the fact that that is not so, and I'm just doing my little consultation here. I'll be back with you in a moment.

What I understand this to be, as I've been told, and seeing by the regulations here, is that the minister does have a reply after the 30 minutes. She can always waive that. So there are 30 minutes for the government side to respond and then the minister has 30 minutes to reply.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm sorry; after we adjourn at 6, she has an opportunity to reply? How do you mean?

**The Vice-Chair:** In that time frame. If the minister wants to waive that 30 minutes also—

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** Mr Chairman, as a member of the governing party, we would like to use our 30 minutes now.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're changing it, then.

**Mr Tascona:** No, we're not changing anything. There was a question by Mr Kennedy, which was properly put, with respect to what the procedure was. His understanding was, it was 30 minutes interchangeable with the minister and the governing party.

The rules say that we have 30 minutes, as the governing party, with respect to a statement or if we wish to ask the minister questions and she consents. Then, after that's finished, the minister has an opportunity to reply for 30 minutes. That's how the rule reads.

**The Vice-Chair:** Exactly what I just said.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm sorry, Mr Chair, could I get your opinion?

**Mr Tascona:** If that's the procedure, we would like our time to commence. Mr Marchese has something to say after this issue is resolved.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me just get this. You need your 30 minutes now?

**Mr Tascona:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** That's fine.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's fine.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: With respect to the revelation that the minister isn't available Tuesday, I wonder then if I could ask the agreement of the committee to put forward a motion that we not sit on Tuesday and be available for the minister at her available time. Either we then would come together on the Wednesday, or I would be happy also to see this motion include a sitting at another time when the minister could be available.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, if I could just quickly respond: I am attending the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. That date has been booked for many months. I had actually offered the committee the fact that I was quite prepared to defer and come back at another time. The House leaders had told me that the opposition didn't want to do that, but if you want to do that, I'm quite flexible to do that, and we can try and find a good date.

**Mr Kennedy:** We're absolutely pleased to do that. That would be great.

**Mr Tascona:** Well—

**The Vice-Chair:** On the same point of order?

**Mr Tascona:** No, I'm just—Mr Marchese may have been saying something, but I guess not.

**Mr Marchese:** That's all right.

**Mr Kennedy:** We're in agreement with that.

**The Vice-Chair:** The point of order then is that we won't sit on Tuesday. Is that the request in your motion?

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes.

**The Vice-Chair:** We'll sit on Wednesday and on another appropriate day, which may be the next Tuesday beyond that.

**Mr Tascona:** So we're going to follow the procedure of what is in the rules today.

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes. Is that agreed upon?

**Mr Tascona:** Yes, that's agreed.

**The Vice-Chair:** So your 30 minutes will start now, then, and the minister won't come on Tuesday with staff.

**Mr Tascona:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

Minister, instead of making a statement, if I could ask you some questions, would you agree to that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly.

**Mr Tascona:** The Liberals allege that you have cut education funding. In my own riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I have seen some positive changes to education since this government has come into office. I think it would help the committee if you could explain how the funding formula works and how much is spent to fund education in this province.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We said we would change the way we fund education in the province, based on many recommendations, different reports for example, that said that the current way education was funded, where if you had a rich assessment base you could have a high property tax and you could spend lots of money on your children's education but if you came from a poor community that didn't have the tax base you couldn't spend a lot of money on your education, this kind of two-tiered approach to education, was wrong and that we should change it. We said we would. So what we do is, first of all, the way education is funded, every board is equitable to every board across the province and it's based on various needs that boards have. For example, we start based on enrolment of students: how many students a board has. On top of that money comes money for things like English as a second language if a board has a high number, and for special-needs students. Again, if a particular community has a very high number of

special-needs students, a board would get more money. If a board is in the north or in a rural area, for example, there are additional funds for that board for the geographic distances.

It's a formula that's been tested several times in the courts. It's also a formula that the Education Improvement Commission looked at and said that the policy was very sound. There continue to be discussions between the ministry and school boards about amounts of money, whether there's enough or whatever. That's a discussion which has been going on in education as long as the system has been there. In 1995, when we came into government, there were approximately \$12.9 billion out there for the education system. It is currently \$13.5 billion, so there is more out there. Secondly, more of that is in the classroom, again a priority we laid out before the 1995 election and again in 1999, to have more of the money being spent not in administration but in classrooms. So there are \$700 million more today in classrooms than there was before. That's since 1977, when we started to track the money. That's a priority. We will continue to find administrative savings, if we can, in various places and reinvest that back into the classroom, and at the same time put new money back into classrooms for important priorities. The example I always use is the special education: a 12% increase for this year.

**Mr Tascona:** So from my understanding, more dollars are going to be spent in the classroom and less is being spent in administration.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes. Mr Peebles can correct me; it's some \$150 million less in administration, I think, somewhere in there anyway. We can certainly get you that number, Mr Tascona.

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington):** Minister, under the new school funding model, I want to turn our attention to the pupil accommodation formula. Before I was elected, in our area, at any rate, in Guelph-Wellington, the process to get a new school was for parents essentially to lobby the board that it was time to get a school. The board would then lobby the ministry, and sometimes we'd lobby the minister directly and hope against hope that somebody would eventually listen and we would be chosen from among the many projects across the province to be funded. My understanding under this new model is that this has changed and that the school boards have much more control over their accommodation decisions, whether they be renovations and/or new capital projects.

I recently met with my own local board, the Wellington Catholic District School Board, and they indicated that they are very pleased with the increased flexibility. They particularly like the predictability. Certainly in my region we're seeing more schools go up than we have in the past. I understand that the Peel District School Board actually had a press release not very long ago indicating that they've embarked on an unprecedented number of constructions of new schools.



What I'm wondering, since we are in estimates, is if you would brief the committee on how this accommodation grant is working, if you have numbers on how successful this model has been and if you are receiving through the ministry the same kind of feedback I'm seeing in my own board and in Peel.

1740

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually I have, and I've seen the difference in my own community. For example, especially in high-growth communities, construction of new schools had fallen woefully behind and the biggest growth industry was school portables. What we've seen in the last two to three years is a decrease of some 9% in the number of school portables as new projects are being built.

The other thing I should say is that my assistant deputy minister, Norbert Hartmann, would be quite happy to go into more detail for you here if you'd like. But just the top line: we're supporting \$2 billion in new school construction that's providing additional spaces for 170,000 students. From 1995 to 2000, 198 new schools have been built and approximately 150 additions or major school renovations have been completed because boards now can plan for the future much better. They can lay out 10-, 15- and 20-year plans. As a matter of fact, we're encouraging it and we fund to encourage that so we don't have the kind of backlog in new schools that we've seen.

If you'd like Norbert to come up, we can certainly go into more detail, unless you have some other issues you want to raise.

**Mrs Elliott:** I think my colleagues may have some other questions, but I'm glad you raised the issue of portables. That was an ongoing problem for parents and students alike. I'm very interested to hear that number is down 9%. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Madam Minister, we've seen all kinds of reports in the newspapers and letters from teachers and boards that the new curriculum is too hard, and basic-level high school students are being left behind. I was wondering what you can do to help the students adjust to the rigorous curriculum.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's a very good question. I've been quite concerned about the feedback we've been hearing.

Just to step back, the new curriculum has been designed to be more rigorous. We've been very up front about that. Literally hundreds of people have been involved in the development of this new curriculum: people from universities and colleges, employer groups, educators, subject experts. The problem, of course, was that the curriculum was not giving students what they needed when they left high school. We started from the question, "What do our students need to know in order to go into the university or college, or directly into the workplace?" That was our starting point. We've put the curriculum in place. For example, 11 and 12 are now out, a full year ahead of when required for grade 11 and a full two years ahead for grade 12, to give teachers the lead

time. So slowing down implementation and giving teachers more lead time is one way we are helping.

Secondly, we are increasing our investment in teacher training so they can become more familiar with the new curriculum and therefore be able to assist students better. We had very great success with our summer institutes, as we call them. It's a co-operative venture between the unions and the ministry, and it works extremely well. That's been another step.

As I mentioned earlier, we put in additional monies for remediation, \$25 million for 70,000 to 80,000 students in grades 7 to 10, crucial years. That is helping.

Additional money, \$64 million, was put forward for the teacher-adviser program to help. Part of the work the curriculum partnership is doing is to say, "What else do we need to do to help basic-level students?" We had a symposium in June where we had all the curriculum experts come. That was one of their priorities; there are several that they have.

So we are working at other strategies to help basic-level kids. As I've said many times, setting higher standards is not quality education if we're not helping students meet those standards. It is a concern, and we've taken some steps to address it. There is more that we need to do.

**Mr Tascona:** I have a question for the minister. You issued a press release yesterday indicating that the government has taken the first step in its teacher testing program. We all know that it is important for teachers to keep up to date with their skills. Please explain to the committee how your most recent announcement will help the teaching profession and what you are working on in this area.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Mr Tascona. One of the commitments we made before the last election was to bring in a comprehensive teacher testing program that would help all of our teachers stay as up to date as they can, up to date on skills training, learning how to do the new curriculum. I've said, and will continue to say every opportunity that I have, that I know we have many good, excellent teachers out there who go above and beyond on a daily basis for their students. The teaching profession, like health professions, for example, the legal profession, and teaching professions in other countries are all facing this challenge and they are bringing in or have brought in quality improvement, quality assurance programs to help their members continually stay up to date.

So we will be phasing in our teacher testing program—we laid out the framework this spring—over the next two to three years. The first step this fall was the language proficiency test. It's something the College of Teachers had recommended and had felt quite strongly about, that teachers who were educated in languages other than English or French, before they are given their certification as a teacher in Ontario, should have a language proficiency test in English or French to ensure that they have those skills. The College of Teachers had actually recommended quite an extensive program for language proficiency testing. We felt that we wanted to



take it a step at a time, so this is the first step in that and we do think it will help.

We want to bring in a bar-exam-for-lawyers concept, if you will, an internship for new teachers and re-certification. So there are a number of steps we're working on with our education partners to implement over the next several years.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, I must interrupt the proceedings now because there is a vote in the House. We'll continue this next Wednesday after routine proceedings.

We stand adjourned now for a vote in the House.

*The committee adjourned at 1747.*

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Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

## Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 4 October 2000

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Mercredi 4 octobre 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Education

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Éducation



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 4 October 2000

Mercredi 4 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1541 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** Can we get the standing committee on estimates for education on the road? Let me just tell you the remaining time left in the rotation. The government has 18 minutes left of their time and then the minister will respond for 30 minutes. Then we can go to our 20-minute rotation thereafter, starting with the official opposition. On the government side, whom do we have leading the charge here?

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** Myself. Minister, research, including the government's own Mustard-McCain study, shows that early years and the early grades are extremely important to a child's intellectual and emotional development. What are you doing to support children's education in the early grades, from junior kindergarten to grade 3 specifically?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** Thank you very much, Mr Tascona, for a very important question. The work of Fraser Mustard, while primarily focused on pre-school children, certainly makes the argument that the early years in the education system are extremely important. That's why we continue to fund junior kindergarten or alternative programs for all school boards, and 70 boards do provide junior kindergarten. Those two that don't provide junior kindergarten provide alternative programming for that age group, which we fund.

We've also moved in our recent legislation this spring, and with an addition of \$101 million, to bring down class size in the junior grades, JK to grade 3, and we're asking boards to report on the success of that so we can assess whether it is being successful and if further changes need to be made.

We've also increased resources by \$70 million for special reading literacy work at the kindergarten to grade 3 level. That includes training teachers, for example, to be more aware, to be able to identify, for example, students who are having learning challenges at earlier years and supports to deal with them.

Those are some of the steps we're taking. I'm looking forward to working with Minister Marland and my other colleagues as we continue to move forward on Fraser Mustard and the commitments we've made in this area.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Minister, we've heard a number of boards complaining about

the fact that they do not have enough resources to buy textbooks. Last April, I believe it was, or maybe March, I spoke to a law class at Cameron Heights Collegiate in Kitchener and I asked the students about this. Some of the students readily indicated that many of the teachers they have don't use the textbooks they have now. That's one question I'd like you to comment on.

I have another one. The Waterloo Region District School Board has recently settled with the high school teachers. They gave them an increase of 4.7%, which I have no objection to. If they've got the money, fine. One of the explanations that came out in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, the newspaper for the area, indicated that they took the money to do this from other areas, one of which was mentioned as being textbooks. That's the second point.

The third point is that many of the teachers have indicated that they do not have manuals for the new textbooks under the new curriculum. It's my understanding that the school boards have been granted funding for those manuals.

I wonder if you could respond to those three points, please.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the reasons that we have standards, for example, on workload for teachers and fund according to that and require boards to report on where the money goes and how it is used is to take steps where money is being used inappropriately. One of the things we had seen before was that the workload standard, the instructional time standard of four hours and 10 minutes a day for secondary teachers, had not been met in some boards and they had said quite publicly they were using textbook money to subsidize a lower workload for the teachers.

That's one of the reasons we set the standard for instructional time, to clearly ensure that the money that was being used to subsidize the lower workload standard was remaining in the system to be used for the purposes it had been given to boards, for example for textbooks.

So boards get money for textbooks in a number of ways, first of all through the basic grants that they get. There is allocation, both elementary and secondary, for textbooks and learning materials. Second, recognizing the incredible need for new materials with the new curriculum, we've put specially targeted money on top of the regular money, if you will, for that. So, for example, for elementary teachers there was an initial \$100 million

that was put in on top of the regular amount specifically targeted to new learning resources. Likewise for 9, 10, and again for 11, 12, we are putting in additional monies on top of that for learning materials.

Some trustees are elected to make decisions on behalf of their community. If they are choosing to use the parts of the foundation grant for teacher wages, depending on how—I mean, we take a look at their annual reports that they put in and a number of things. We'll be taking a look at those kinds of issues.

I find it ironic that a board that would say, "We're going to take money designed for new textbooks and use it for another purpose," would then come back and say to the ministry, "We want to criticize you for not giving money to our teachers for new textbooks." We've certainly heard the message about more resources for new curriculum. That's why we did it, that's why we continue to provide further new training and the supports, because I think those materials help teachers in the classroom to teach the new curriculum.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Do the boards in fact have that money for the manuals that go along with the textbooks? It's my understanding they do.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can provide you with detailed information on that, but we have given new money to boards precisely for the purchase of new materials for the curriculum.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Minister, certainly one does not want to bring American politics into this, but I couldn't help but watch the presidential debate last night on the education portion. Both Al Gore and George Bush seemed to agree when it came to testing our children to make sure that they're not left behind. I was shocked that the American liberals—Al Gore stands for mandatory ongoing teacher testing. So I'm shocked that the Ontario Liberals object to this sort of testing to make sure that our professionals are up to date with current standards.

1550

But in relation to student testing and the new curriculum, which was also an enormous part of the debate, can you explain the grades 11 and 12 curriculum in relation to the global economy? Obviously, the Americans are in this game of education for the economy. They've always understood that they need a very strong economy and that there's growth with having a well-educated workforce, and they have standards in curriculum and teacher testing. Can you explain the grades 11 and 12 curriculum to us, please?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly. First of all, yes, I think it is interesting to note that in many jurisdictions around the world, the challenge of how we have more or how we have better teaching excellence, if you will—not to imply that there aren't many excellent teachers there in our systems today, but the challenge of increasing excellence, keeping teachers as up to date as possible, is not unique to Ontario. Indeed, for example, on Tuesday, as the members will know, when I was at the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, my colleague from Nova Scotia

had just announced a mandatory recertification-professional development initiative that they're starting. You can see it in the United States as well.

We are not unique or somehow not doing what other jurisdictions are doing when we are bringing in a comprehensive teacher-testing program designed to make sure that all of our teachers are as up to date as possible. I share your surprise that the opposition parties, despite what's happening around the world, would not share our view on that.

On the grades 11 and 12 curriculum, two things: first of all, I think it's important to recognize that we didn't simply take five years of high school and squash them into four. We took 13 years of schooling and completely restructured it from kindergarten to grade 12, to be consistent with what's happening in other jurisdictions but also to make sure that from kindergarten to grade 12 our students are getting the information, the knowledge that they need in order to go out wherever their career will take them and compete with the Americans or the English or the Australians or whoever, so that they've got the best chance to compete with the best of the world and succeed, as they certainly can.

When that curriculum was designed, we went to not only many, many educators, teachers, subject experts, but also employers, universities, colleges, apprenticeship training programs and asked, "What is it that students need to succeed in your world when they walk out with that piece of paper in their hand that says they went through high school?"

The grades 11 and 12 curriculum very much reflects the advice that we heard on that, so it is targeted to give students choices around where they think they might end up. It might well be university, but the majority of our students do not go to university; they go either directly into the workforce or to college or other kinds of training and apprenticeship programs. That is reflected in the choices that students have.

As I mentioned earlier, we put in more resources to help with the new materials required for grades 11 and 12. The other thing that we did, and certainly again responding to some of the concerns we heard from teachers that the curriculum was a big chunk to digest and get ready for, the grade 11 curriculum is out over a year ahead of when it will start to be brought into high school. The grade 12 curriculum is out a full two years ahead of when it will be coming in because we want to make sure that everyone in the system has the chance to get ready as best they can for our students, especially for those last two crucial years in high school.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** My question is about accountability for the boards of this province. In the last few months I've been fairly involved with looking at budgets, both of two or three years past and one of the current ones, as well as receiving a lot of calls from parents, especially in the lower grades, kindergarten, grades 1 and 2, where there are 28 and 30 in the classes. Parents are very concerned about that where they can't get any assistance, TAs, whatever, for the teachers.



Also, in looking at those budgets, I looked, as Mr Wettlaufer has said, at where funds are taken out of textbooks and supplies and put into other areas, they're taken out of maintenance and put into other areas, and yet some of the boards seem to be telling the people, "No, we can't switch from envelope to envelope." I know there are some ways you can and some ways you can't, but they're telling them, "No, you can't do it, period." The bottom line is, "We do not have any money, so go and blame everybody you possibly can except me, the board."

I would like to know how we can initiate audits, whether it be on a random basis or a periodic basis—and I'm not talking about an audit where you're going to say, "We will be there in six months to do an audit." I'm talking about an audit, "We will be there tomorrow morning to audit your books," my point being because I want to know whether they're getting the money and it's not going to the right place. If they're not getting money, then I am the first one to fight on their behalf. But it leaves me a little bit short of understanding when I see in black and white what is happening regarding budgets and they then say, "Oh no, we don't have money for textbooks, we don't have money for supplies, we don't have money for Eas." I believe some of the kids, especially in the junior grades, are falling through the cracks. So getting back to accountability, audit, how do we access it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Mr Stewart. Having been on the receiving end when you were fighting for your community, I want to answer this question well because I don't want to have to go through that again.

It's a very good question. Yes, there are certain envelopes that we do envelope, I guess, to say that, and for good reason, because we'd heard from teachers and parents that they disagreed strongly about what was happening to those resources in some boards. Again, not all boards are the same. Many make very excellent decisions about use of their money and some seem to have challenges in making those decisions.

For example, special education money: a school board cannot take a special education dollar and spend it outside of special education. They can certainly top up, as many boards do. We encourage boards to find administrative savings in non-classroom expenditures and use those savings—the ministry doesn't claw them back; the board can keep that money—in classroom funds. Many do so in many areas and have found savings in administration and continue to do that and look for ways—whether it's bus transportation, whether it's consortium purchasing, a whole range of areas—to put that money back into the classroom.

We do envelope some, and I think with good reason. We envelope classroom money, because one of the stated goals of our funding reform, before we were elected in 1995 and again in 1999, was to put more priority of education dollars in classrooms as opposed to administration. We'd seen over the past many years that education

property taxes had gone up some 120%—money going into the system had gone up in a 10-year period—but I've got to tell you I didn't ever meet a teacher or a student who'd seen that kind of increase in their resources in the classroom. The reason was because the biggest majority of that money was being siphoned into administrative, non-classroom purposes.

We are shifting that. We're now up to 65% of the dollars that are out there in-classroom. It works out to about \$700 million more than was there before. But simply handing out that money to a board I don't think ends our responsibility, because more accountability in what's happening with that money is part of that.

We are moving forward to have, I guess the term is, board report cards. What that will include when this is complete is a sort of board financial profile so parents and taxpayers and teachers will be able to see where all the money is going in a board. We are looking at how we can then give them data to best compare their boards against other boards. A school board might take textbook money and use it for some other purpose in the classroom, for example, and parents might be quite happy with that. The school council may well have been part of that—

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Minister. That ends the time, Mr Stewart. You have 30 minutes in which to respond. You can take as much time as you want but don't take over 30 minutes. You can also take less.

**1600**

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Actually, I will just finish Mr Stewart's answer—to give the parents information so they can make comparisons between boards, because there may well be priority decisions they agree with: the school board and the trustees taking money from this priority in the classroom and putting it in that priority in the classroom. They elect trustees and that would be a legitimate exercise for them to do.

The other thing through Bill 74, the Education Accountability Act, is that we do have authority. If we have a board that is, say, taking money for lower class size and cashing the cheque but not using that money to have lower classes, and if the parents wish to come forward and say they question what that board is doing and they don't think the report the board is giving to the government is an accurate reflection of what's happening in classrooms, we have the ability to investigate, to take a look, and if there is a problem, to fix that, to move forward on that. So I think that's very important.

Just to touch on some of the points that have been made previously, just to wrap up, I think it's important to state again that what the government is attempting to achieve is to improve student achievement in the system and to make sure that our young people are in a very strong position to get what they need from the education system, to get the tools, the knowledge, the ability they need to succeed, not only academically, not only in the work world, but also as successful citizens in the community.

To boil that down, as you've heard me do that, more accountability and better quality are the two watchwords we use to guide all of our reforms. It starts with how we fund education. We've moved to a system that is equitable, that is fair, that does not have a child having to rely on whether they are living in a rich community or a poor community to have appropriate monies being spent on their education.

We have increased money to education. Again, some of our critics like to say, "Oh, there's been \$1 billion or \$2 billion"—depending on which day of the week you're talking to them—"cut out of education." When we first assumed government, there was \$12.9 billion in our education system; today it's \$13.5 billion, and more of that is in classrooms, so we think that's extremely important. It's a fair way, it's an equitable way and a more stable way for boards to understand and be able to predict the resources they have.

One of the criticisms from some of our critics is that on the one hand they like to say that our funding is somehow a cookie-cutter approach and then in the same breath say, "Well, we're disadvantaged because our board doesn't get as much money as the next board." Despite the illogic of holding those thoughts at the same time, the funding is designed deliberately to recognize unique needs of boards. So there is a foundation grant, where there are basic costs of education that are common to all students, that goes to every board regardless of where the students live.

On top of that are nine special-purpose grants which offer additional funding to meet various costs and needs, and there are significant differences. For example, the Toronto school board gets some 40% of all the money for English as a second language. Not surprisingly, the Toronto board has one of the higher immigration populations and therefore the highest ESL need. We have other boards that would get much more money for rural issues such as transportation than an urban board, again because those distances that those boards face are quite significant in terms of cost, so we recognize that in the grants that boards get.

There are special education grants; language learning opportunities which basically are designed to reflect the needs of the population, for example, inner-city students' needs; adult education; teacher compensation; early learning; and transportation. All of those are additional monies on top of the foundation grant for boards.

The pupil accommodation grant is the money that goes to school boards to provide the maintenance, operation and building of new schools. I think it's a very important grant. One of the assumptions, one of the foundations of this money, is that we believe boards should continue to have the responsibility of planning effective accommodation for their students. It's not a new responsibility for them. The way they get the money gives them the tools they need to make longer-term plans and to spend their dollars quite effectively. What we're doing now is asking school boards, under the accountability framework, to provide information to us on, first, how well the funding

is working for accommodation, and second, what their long-term plans and needs are so that we can make sure that we are funding the appropriate needs in accommodation out there, building new schools, renovating schools, eliminating portables, leasing existing schools, all of those very important priorities.

The new way to fund on the accommodation side is giving boards something they've never had before. Rather than having to line up in the queue and compete for capital grants every year, they can actually predict the revenue flow they're going to get on this. They can begin new school construction when they need to do so, and even though that funding has only been in place for two years, we're starting to see very quickly the benefits of that. We're reducing the number of portable classrooms, for example, by 1,250. This is a reduction of more than 9% as schools are starting to catch up on the building in the new growth communities. That's extremely important. What we've seen in the last five years is that school boards have built some 214 new schools and undertaken 193 additions or major renovations.

As I mentioned earlier, classroom funding remains, and will continue to be, the priority for where we want to put the dollars. Again, our goal here is improving student achievement. We know we can help do that if we keep the priority for the money in the classroom. As I mentioned, not only is there more money for education overall, province-wide, there is also \$700 million more of that money in the classroom—again, clearly one of our stated objectives. As I said, that's more than 65% of operating funding in 2000-01 that is actually going into classroom.

The question has been raised about support for the new curriculum. It is a legitimate question in a couple of ways. First of all, now that the new curriculum is out there, all 12 years of it—and it represents an incredible amount of work by an incredible number of experts and teachers—the question now is, how do we ensure that we will be teaching and learning, if you will, better. So we are taking steps, for example, in a number of these areas.

One of the concerns is that it is a more rigorous curriculum and some students may be having some difficulty with it, so we are bringing in \$150 million in funding to support the implementation of secondary school reform, which includes not only the textbooks and training for teachers but more curriculum and resource materials to support those teachers, guides to help the teachers achieve standardized grading, implementation of the new report card and remediation programs for students who need that extra help. The \$150 million was a previous commitment which is actually out there in the system, and then in the grant regulation, the funding for this current school year, we provided another \$25 million to help grade 7, 8, 9 and 10 students improve their literacy skills and meet the standard of the new grade 10 literacy test.

Also, school boards received monies for what we call crossover courses so that students can change streams. I mentioned in high school that they can choose courses



based on their destination: university, college, workplace, for example. We also have courses so they can change, cross over from stream to stream, because that is a major decision for a young person.

1610

There's \$64 million that helps support the teacher adviser program, which is an assistance to students not only on the career-subject-course selection process but also on the remediation side.

In February we released the second \$30-million investment in textbooks for just the grade 10 students, for example. So we're continuing to take those kinds of steps.

Again, through the new high school program, I think it's important to note that the emphasis remains on reading, writing, math, science and technology.

I mentioned earlier in the questions that we had introduced the new curriculum for grades 11 and 12. I think, though, it bears repeating that grade 11 is out over a year ahead of when it will be coming into effect. Grade 12 is two years ahead. This will hopefully provide teachers and school boards with more lead time to prepare for that new curriculum.

We also certainly heard the concerns teachers had about the need for more training. That's why this past summer some 9,500 teachers took part in what we called Summer Institutes on the new curriculum. I think it's important to note as well, because sometimes it gets lost in the media headlines, that the reason those institutes exist is because of the co-operation and the work between the teachers' federations and the ministry. They are jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the Ontario Teachers' Federation. We fund them so that teachers don't have to pay for them. They were over-subscribed last summer. We doubled the spaces and they were oversubscribed again this summer. We're trying to figure out how we can double or triple it, or however it is, to make it bigger next summer. They have been a very popular support for teachers, whether elementary or secondary.

Again, hearing the concerns about making sure that children get off to a good start with literacy and numeracy skills, we have the additional \$70 million targeted specifically for that purpose at junior kindergarten to grade 3.

We've talked a lot at this committee about special education. It is a very important priority. We made a commitment to protect funding for vulnerable children who need special-needs funding. As I mentioned, we have indeed done that. Boards must spend special-needs money on special-needs students, and many boards spend more than that on their students because they have found savings in other areas and also because they see it as a priority. We are spending \$1.3 billion this school year. That is a 12% increase over last year. That also represents the third year in a row that we've increased money for special needs.

We remain committed to what I'll call a two-part special education grant. This is something that I know

there's been a great deal of confusion about and it's something that we're working on to ensure that boards and board staff and teachers appreciate what that means. Today, one of the members of the opposition parties shared a letter with me that had been written to a parent that basically said, "Little Johnny doesn't qualify for ISA funding"—the intensive support amount funding—"so despite the fact that he has all of these other disabilities, gee, so sorry, we can't help him." That is absolutely wrong, because the reason that school boards receive special-needs funding in a flexible way, what they call the SEPPA grant, is so that they can indeed deal with little Johnny or little Mary or little Sally, whether it's a learning disability or another kind of challenge. They have the flexibility to deal with what that young person, that child, needs to have an education.

We have heard a number of recommendations over this past year from school boards and parents of special-needs children. I have a specific advisory committee of individuals who represent special-needs children across the province who have given excellent advice. We took a number of those steps this year in terms of increasing monies, in terms of improving the process, and we will continue to take those steps. The reason we said we were going to have a three-year process to do this—I'm the first one to recognize that more work needs to be done to make sure that money flows the way it should and is being used as well as it can be.

We recognize the need to reduce process in submitting ISA claims, and we're prepared to continue the work to make this a more regular funding cycle for boards, to move away from all boards having to submit annual claims about all the students they believe are eligible. We want a more routine audit approach where the ministry reviews some boards on a multi-year rather than an annual cycle. One step builds on the fact that over the past three years some boards have developed effective ways to organize the work required for a successful ISA claim process. We are going to continue to work with boards to find good practices. While we want to reduce administrative effort, at the same time we want to make sure that the accountability remains there so that this money is going to those students and is going in a way that best helps them; through individual education plans, for example, to plan what a student needs each year.

There are many other approaches that we're working on. We're continuing to work with school boards and other members of the special-needs community to improve the way this money flows to make sure that the increased resources are doing the job that they should be doing. As I think I mentioned earlier, we're working to develop province-wide standards for the individual educational plans for each student, and also over the next two years we're establishing program standards to ensure that students with special needs receive a quality education from the boards, so that the boards know the kinds of things they should have in place for high-quality programs and services, whatever a child's exceptionality might be.



One of the other issues that has come up has to do with our efforts to keep the public informed, to communicate with the voters about what it is we do. I take it personally, frankly. I see it very much as part of accountability for me and my colleagues as a government to report on a regular basis to voters. Part of that accountability is ensuring that the public knows exactly what is happening in education. We have a responsibility to provide parents and taxpayers with the information they need to become full partners. We are indeed doing that. We've introduced long-overdue comprehensive reforms. One of the things I've heard consistently from parents is the need and the request for more information. We continue to get many phone calls and e-mails and correspondence asking for more. We're undertaking to continue to do that.

The expenditures we discussed last week on this reflect the extent of our commitment for spring and fall information campaigns. The ministry follows the directives specified by Management Board Secretariat for doing these kinds of things, because again I believe that accountability is not just for school boards and all those within school boards, but also for the government.

One of the other issues I want to touch on again is instructional time, the workload standard. We think that was very much part of the standards we said we would be setting for the education system. Province-wide standards for the amount of time teachers spend teaching in the classroom were set first in 1997. We moved our teachers closer to the national average for teaching time in Canada so that our secondary teachers are teaching at least four hours and 10 minutes a day. It's a board-wide average, which I think is important to note, because we continue to believe that teachers' responsibilities and workloads may well vary within a school and we believe it's important for the boards to have the flexibility, however they work it out with their particular bargaining unit, to make those decisions. The Education Accountability Act restates instruction time in terms of course loads and credit courses, which is a common way to do teachers' timetables. We ask boards to average that across the school board and to report on that.

It's important to recognize two things: first of all that the instructional time standards certainly recognize, for the purposes of instructional time, credit courses, ESL or ALF courses, which is the French equivalent, special education programs, remedial courses, the teacher adviser program. All of those can be included as part of the calculation on instructional time standards. The legislation permits flexibility on a board-wide basis and within each school by allowing differences among schools and teachers as to the number of courses a school or an individual teacher may well be allocated.

1620

There are a variety of models that may be used to achieve that. It's something, as I said, that boards and unions have the flexibility to work out. We do require each board to report on the success of meeting those standards. With some of the models we understand some

boards have or are bringing in, teachers may teach four credits in one semester and three in each of the next three semesters, so that would be one semester every second year; some teachers teach half-credit courses. Some schools have used team teaching approaches of various kinds to take advantage of the different expertise of teachers. Some teachers may teach one or more sections of a course that has been divided into modules. Again, depending on the course, this is something that some believe works well. So that flexibility is there.

The other thing I want to stress is if that particular workload standard means for a particular board that they're somehow saving money, that is money the board has. It remains in that board's budget.

Second, one of the concerns we had heard was that the instructional time standard may well have an impact. One of the criticisms was that it might have an impact on the number of jobs of teachers, and that's one of the reasons we invested the \$263 million to help minimize any potential job loss, because that \$263 million for smaller classes—basically, smaller classes mean more teachers. We hoped that would help to address the concern we had heard. The other reason we're certainly interested in doing it is because class size, as we know, continues to remain an important indicator for parents and teachers, so while we've taken significant steps in that area, we recognize that more may need to be done.

Combined grades is an issue that we've heard from many teachers in the elementary section. Certainly combined grades have been around since the first one-room schoolhouse, but with the new curriculum it is much more difficult, more challenging for a teacher. We've been working with the curriculum implementation partnership to develop strategies and supports for teachers. Again, that has been working very well, with the support of not only the faculties of ed and the teachers' federation, which are two of our partners on that, and we're working to provide supports for teachers. We've invested more money to do that: for example, \$2.6 million in this school year for workshops on combined grades; a resource manual of best practices and strategies for classroom management and lesson planning; sample models of combined-grade curriculum implementation. All of these are helping teachers deliver courses like science and technology especially, two of the subjects teachers told us presented the greatest challenge in combined grades.

The other thing that's interesting to note is that early data—and again, this is data that we request from boards—actually is showing that the number of combined grades has decreased in all regions of the province over the past three years. We think that's a very good trend.

Just to wind up on teacher testing, as I said earlier—and again, our critics like to say every education reform we take is somehow an attack on teachers, which distresses me greatly, because that kind of constant criticism and refrain is one of the reasons teachers feel like they're always under attack—the teacher testing program is

designed to ensure that the teaching profession can be as up to date as possible, that all teachers are going to have the up-to-date knowledge, skills and training they require. There are many teachers out there who, any chance they get, are upgrading their quality and their skills. I suspect they're not even going to notice this, because they're already out there doing it. But we want to make sure that all of our teachers are able to do that.

So the steps we've implemented, for example—we announced the framework in May, and again, this was after many months of consultation with all our education partners—we want to support new teachers entering the profession, as well as established teachers. The program will be multi-faceted, if you will. As many members may have heard me say, this is not the teacher testing program Earl Manners said it would be—sorry, Mark—this is the teacher testing program we said we were going to introduce.

#### *Interjection.*

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be glad to send the member a copy of the framework we announced in May.

The first step this fall was the new language proficiency requirement. New applicants to the teaching profession, those who have been trained outside Ontario in a language other than English or French, will have to pass a language proficiency test before they receive certification.

The other steps are going to be to have a qualifying test for new entrants to the profession after they've come through teachers' college, similar, as I describe it, to a lawyer's bar exam, to make sure they have the knowledge and skills they need before they get into the profession. We want to have an internship for new teachers, much like what physicians have, to get young teachers off to the best start.

We're introducing standards for teacher performance evaluation to make sure all school boards and principals are undertaking their responsibilities in teacher evaluation and assessment in the appropriate way. We are also going to have—and this is work we are doing now with our education partners—more quality assurance review processes on a school-by-school basis. Again, if we have problems in a school we need to take the steps to fix that, and part of this program will allow us to do that.

There is no question that this is a major reform initiative. We certainly understand that. We also recognize that we did a lot in a short period of time, in the last mandate, that has asked a lot from our education partners. We have slowed down in this mandate to recognize that, but at the same time we are going to continue to move forward with the commitments we made.

I want to continue to ask for the best advice I can receive from our partners on how best to implement those commitments. I should say that advice has been very helpful on many initiatives, and I will continue to seek it. I know they will continue to offer it in a number of different ways. As everyone knows, they don't pull their punches.

I wish to continue to move forward on doing the things we said we would do for our kids, so they will have the best education they possibly can.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Minister. We'll start the 20-minute rotation now with the official opposition.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I appreciate this opportunity, Minister, and having heard some of your answers, I'd like to go back to some of them.

In general, in your opening statement, you offered us a discussion of the big picture, and I'd like to say, with all due respect that it's severely misleading. When you talked about the big picture, you said there were more resources. I want to draw your attention to the very basic figures on funding education in Ontario.

In 1995-96, with inflation included, just inflation, spending on education was \$14.7 billion. If you want to compare the spending when you came into office with spending today, that's what it would be in present-day dollars. If you also include the additional number of kids, the enrolment, if you put that in, then the equivalent to 1995-96 spending is \$15.17 billion.

Minister, you are telling us and the parents and students of this province that you value them. You say that you do in a lot of your advertising, and yet your actual comparable funding is something on the order of \$13.4 billion. So you are actually spending about \$918 less per student when inflation and enrolment are factored in.

Just to make it more relevant, in places like, let's say, Waterloo, that's \$759 less per student. So when Mr Wettlaufer goes to look for answers, he should look on his desk, because his government has made that possible. In Thames Valley, in London, it's \$536 less per student. The member opposite, Mr Mazzilli, is in agreement with that, I guess. But it would be unfortunate if that was the case. Minister, they need some straight talk and some straight answers from you.

**1630**

I want to draw your attention to one other thing before I ask for your response to this. You've said to the people of this province in the last few minutes, and you've said it many times before, that you cut the money out of things they didn't need. I challenge you to table comparable categories—in other words, you changed the categories in 1997—and give the figures that allow the public, the people of this province, to see where you've cut the money from. Give us the exact categories that were there in 1995 or give us the 1995 categories in comparison to what you have today, because I want to offer you some possible comparisons and I want to hear from you on them.

One line that exists that looks to me to be the same in your 1995 figures as it is today is board administration and governance. You've talked a lot about board administration and governance. Your government certainly did when they said they were going to bring in the new funding formula. In point of fact, the total spending on board administration and governance after 10 years is



only down 10%. That's all it's down. In other words, cuts to board administration and governance, after your mighty effort, are only 4% of the money you've cut out of the school system—4%. Only four cents on the dollar has come out of board administration. So the question for the people of the province is, where is the money coming from? Where are the cuts coming from?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be happy to answer your question, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm going to give you these figures because—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You've got some fundamental errors in your assumptions which I think the record needs to show.

**Mr Kennedy:** You can have every opportunity to demonstrate what you say are fundamental errors but, believe me, these are your figures. These are based on ministry data, and only on ministry data. What's missing is your acknowledgement that these are the cuts you've made.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm looking at ministry data here and it's not supporting what you're saying, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** In transportation, in 1995-96, \$667 million; today, \$577 million. Again, in present dollars, and that's not including enrolment influence. So you've cut transportation by 13%, and there are kids walking on the side of the highway today because you cut transportation. Adult education: I think you might even be proud of this one, but you cut it by some \$68 million or 33%.

In your statement you talked about money since 1997. You've been in office since 1995, and it's when you came in that you made your cuts. So I don't want you to be cute with us. Will you table for us line-by-line comparisons so that parents, students, teachers and interested members of the public can tell how much money you're actually spending on education, on children in this province?

I'll come back to the top, because I know you'd like to respond. Your own figures show, with just inflation impacting, you're spending \$918 less per student. I'd like you to table any contrary figures you have, anything that your ministry has here today to show that once inflation is taken into account you're not doing that. Frankly, the figures you've already given us indicate that as well. Do you have some contrary figures today? Could we see them in front of us?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, the only one who is being cute with figures here, with all due respect, is yourself, and I'm talking about your research, not your physical attributes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Do you have the figures, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's my understanding that we've already tabled with you, many months ago, the chart that shows—let me go back to one of your first assumptions.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll give you a copy of my figures if you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, you asked me a question. Do you or do you not want an accurate answer?

**Mr Kennedy:** I don't want you to spend a lot of time. I would like to know if you would give us the answer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Do you or do you not want an accurate answer?

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Let's get some process going here.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want accurate.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Funding is based on enrolment. So, first of all, to make an argument that somehow or other the dollars are not reflecting enrolment is patently false. That is how boards receive money—per student—so enrolment is one of the important things. Secondly, I could throw in what funding was before for education. I could include the teachers' pension plan, for example. I could include—

**Mr Kennedy:** If you like, but—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, just a second. You asked me—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I asked you a simple question.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, if he doesn't want the facts, we don't have to provide them.

**Mr Kennedy:** You're not going to get away, Minister. I've got 20 minutes and you're not going anywhere. I've asked you—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. One moment, let's get some better interaction so I can understand who is speaking. Is the minister responding or are you asking a question?

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm asking a question. The minister has been given time to answer it. With all due respect, I've asked a simple question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I didn't know we had time limits on my answers.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've asked a simple question: will you table figures to show what your funding is with inflation and enrolment factored in? Will you table those figures to this committee whose job it is to know what kind of job you're doing for the students of Ontario? I've tabled figures—these will be in the hands of all the members of this committee—that you have cut funding by \$918. You're filling the air with a lot of time—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Wait a minute. What number was that, Mr Kennedy?

**Mr Kennedy:** It was \$918 per student.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Ah, so it's not \$2 billion, you said—

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, it is.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's not \$1.5 billion. It depends how you calculate it. Here we go with funny research again.

**Mr Kennedy:** You are the minister. I'm asking you to table figures. I'm giving you mine—\$1.8 billion cut, \$1.6 billion cut out of operating funds—a total of \$1.8 billion missing from the system under your government's watch.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** In 1995—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, will you table the figures?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I have an answer for you, Mr Kennedy.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, I think Mr Kennedy gave you a good opportunity for almost 28 minutes to respond.



He has 20 minutes. If he wants to ask questions without waiting for an answer—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It was \$12.9 billion in 1995-96—

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—\$13.5 billion today—

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—in transfers to the school system.

**The Vice-Chair:** Can I get some order here, please?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's an increase, not a decrease, Mr Kennedy—

**The Vice-Chair:** Please. Order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—and he has those figures, because we gave them before.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, taking your own figures, then you're admitting exactly what I'm saying is true, because \$12.9 billion with 11% inflation becomes the figure we're talking about—over \$14 billion. In other words, if that's what you're going to rely on, then you've admitted essentially that you're underfunding the children of this province by the figures that I'm referring to.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm giving you facts, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** You're apparently afraid to table the facts, to put them in writing.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You already have that chart. We gave it to you months ago.

**Mr Kennedy:** No, Minister, we don't.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We'd be quite happy to give it to you again if you've lost it.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've asked you now—this is the fourth time, but I'll state it just for the record so people know what you're avoiding, what you're dancing around and what you're afraid to answer. What you're afraid to answer is the fact that inflation and enrolment mean that you have cut funding by \$918. I have invited you five times now to table your own figures and refute that. You haven't, and you won't, because you can't.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not true.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to ask you again then the second part of that challenge, to see whether you actually believe in being accountable or not, to see whether you're a minister who's going to stand behind the actions of your department. Will you provide us—because it takes ministry resources to do it—with a comparison of the spending taking place, by category, between 1995, when you came into office, and today? Will you actually give us those figures so that we can do the comparisons that I've already suggested are only available right now for board administration and governance, for transportation and adult education? Will you give us the other line comparisons? Will you undertake to do that, or are you afraid of that too?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we made a commitment to you that we would provide a number of pieces of information that you had asked for. You've asked for a number during the course of this committee. We will provide that information to you. Second, for 1995-96 numbers and 1999-2000-01, we want to give you accurate information, and some of those comparisons you cannot do because it's very different the way we fund

and boards collect. Boards had a whole series of ways they counted up money before. We are working to have apples-to-apples data here, because that was not in the system before we changed the way we fund.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm not going to wait, with respect—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So you cannot say that; you can't make an apples-to-apples comparison.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've given you an opportunity on two specific grounds and you're saying that there are apples and apples and oranges and oranges. What you're not saying is that you're not afraid to give us the comparisons of exactly what you're funding. If you're saying you can't, then I think we have to accept it as an answer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can give you all kinds of data, but it would not be accurate to—

**Mr Kennedy:** From 1995 to today, yes or no?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can give you 1995-96. That's in estimates. That's out there, that's not a new thing. That's public data. If you've lost it we'll give you more, but it's already tabled in previous estimates.

**Mr Kennedy:** No, Minister. What isn't public data is the comparison between the categories you used in 1995-96, which are public, and what is available today. Your ministry staff can provide that or not. Minister, answer the question, or you're just wasting everybody's time. Will you do that or not?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We'll be quite happy to give you past estimates that show this.

**Mr Kennedy:** No, I want the detail. If you're afraid to give it—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, we can give you details.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's not in estimates. I want to know if you'll give it to us or not. What are you afraid of? You're the minister of the crown, you've got all kinds of people working for you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I said we would be providing you with a whole deal of information you've asked for.

**Mr Kennedy:**—and you're giving us this plabum.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. You've asked me for more information and we're going to do it.

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**Mr Kennedy:** You gave us one little chart last time. There are 16 questions in the last estimates you never even answered. Now—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We answered that one. We'd be happy to look at it.

**Mr Kennedy:** And now I'm asking you one or two questions, Minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** We're going to move on. Minister, Mr Kennedy—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We will be tabling information, as we said would. We will—

**The Vice-Chair:** One moment please. I have been very, very—

**Mr Mazzilli:** Oh, come on.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, please. I've been very lax in having a free flow of debate that goes on. If it

continues that I can't hear what's going on, I may have to ask you all to speak to the Chair, because of what is happening. I don't know if we're getting anywhere with this. Let's proceed.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I also want to enter for the record—and I'll ask the clerk to distribute these—a second related issue which is to show that the government's share of education funding, not just the total amount of funding going to the schools and to the kids, is down by \$918 per student; down some \$757 in Kitchener and some \$536 in London and some \$453 in Peterborough.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's not accurate, by the way.

**Mr Kennedy:** Those reductions have taken place, but in addition—and I'll table this again. This date is May 9. There is no refutation for this report. This government has cut its share from the income tax base it is so proud to brag about by 29%. So not only is it giving less to kids, it's paying less of its freight—the same charge it tries to make about other levels of government. Now I'm going to—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Will you table that right now?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm making this available to the committee and, again, just for the public record, Minister, I will invite you to change your mind and provide a level of detail.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The data he's talking about are data from the ministry. I don't know where else he would have got that. That data does not show that education has been decreased.

**Mr Kennedy:** It does, Minister, and it's not refutable.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Money to school boards goes via a government grant and property taxes. If you take one without the other—

**Mr Kennedy:** Madam Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:**—you are inaccurately reflecting the money that is going to school boards.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Minister, you have yet to table anything to refute any of this, so it's going to be on the record as—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, you have that chart. That's why you have this information.

**Mr Kennedy:**—your not having done that.

Minister, in addition, I'd like to ask you—I asked the question. I assume there's been a sufficient interval. You were going to look into, for this committee, how much money it would cost to bring six out of eight as a staffing formula to the schools, and you were going to come back to us and tell us how much that is. How much money would that cost, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I said, Mr Kennedy, you have a number of questions that you've asked. We will be providing you with the information. Estimates are not over. You have a number of questions, I'm sure there may well be others from you and your colleagues, and we are providing information to you.

**Mr Kennedy:** I just want to record, Mr Chair, that on this simple request, with all the assembled staff we have from the ministry—I don't want them to identify themselves but there's at least 15 people in the room—we couldn't get that answer by a week later.

Minister, I want to ask you about your strategy. I want to then address—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, you're not finished asking questions. I felt we should file stuff together so we've got an accurate reflection of all of the questions you and your colleagues have asked.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Minister, I'm going to ask you about that. I'm going to ask you why—I have an estimate, in the absence of yours, and it's sad that you won't put the information on the table, but—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I didn't say that.

**Mr Kennedy:**—it looks to me that the cost is something around \$150 million. That looks to be the cost of putting six out of eight into the schools. Now, Minister, I want to ask you—there's chaos out there in the schools. You've got a majority of schools with tremendous problems in terms of extracurricular activities. You've got all kinds of other disruptions taking place that were not there last year. Over and over again, you want to blame teachers for that. You don't want to take responsibility. You've done it in the Legislature.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Kennedy:** You've said that there are teachers making this choice. The fact is, Minister, I want to ask for your strategy here. Are you prepared at any point—and this is a question parents are asking us all the time. I've got over 50 e-mails in the last number of days from parents just asking, "Will the minister do something about the funding formula? Will she allow this flexibility to take place?" So I'm going to ask you again, Minister, will you at all consider giving boards back the flexibility to go to six out of eight? Will you provide the funding to do that? Is that an option that you're even willing to consider? Is it at all on the table? Will you look at it as a way of restoring some sense of normalcy to schools, of getting rid of some of the chaos that you've induced?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, the workload standard that is in place for high school students is based on the national average. I would say to you, what does the Liberal Party think? Do you think teachers in Ontario are not as capable as teachers across the country?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm sorry to put this big onus on you. I know it's difficult, but you do wear the mantle. You are the minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And we took our position in Bill 74.

**Mr Kennedy:** You are in the position right now of making a decision, and as the minister said—I'd love to let you answer but you're not answering the question. Will you consider—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I don't tell you how to ask them, so don't tell me how to answer them, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Will you at least consider giving the funding and the flexibility back to the boards so that extracurricular activities, so that normalcy can come back



in? Last year you had 70 out of 72 boards with normal operations, normal extracurricular. You forced on them the staffing formula. You've extracted what looks like about \$150 million as the cost of the lowered staffing. I'm wondering, now that it's out there and causing such difficulty, will you even consider, is it even a possibility—because I think everybody out there is looking for a signal from you—the parents, the students. They've been going to your members' offices, they've been going all over. They want to know, is there a flexible minister there willing to look at what she's done, willing to see whether there's a possibility? I just want to know, will you acknowledge the possibility to add that \$150 million back, to give the money and the flexibility or not?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, you missed the announcement in March. I've already done that. I put in \$263 million for smaller classes. I put in \$90 million to change the workload standard to include instructional time and teacher-adviser time. We put in \$143 million, increased money, for special-needs funding, just to list a few.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you can waste all the time you want. It's palpably obvious you're doing that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me finish the answer, Mr Kennedy. We have put more money back in. We have moderated the definition of classroom time to accommodate those issues. So we have already moved on that.

**Mr Kennedy:** You haven't moved on that. I demonstrated conclusively that you've taken money out and, further, you've made it illegal to have the flexibility for six out of eight.

I want to know if it's a money issue. You won't acknowledge the costs. I assume your silence on it means that you're going to stick by your guns at all costs, because you won't indicate that you're flexible.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, our position in terms of workload standard is articulated in Bill 74. We took steps to improve that from the standard that was set two years ago, with additional monies. We put more money on the table for more teachers, for example. We have taken those steps. Boards are being asked to negotiate agreements within budgets. Again, that's not a new responsibility for them. So we have taken steps and we will continue to do that. There are teachers—

**Mr Kennedy:** What is your ministry's assessment of how much extracurricular is taking place?

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got about 30 seconds left.

**Mr Kennedy:** What study can you give us today to show us how much extracurricular was happening before Bill 74 and how much is happening now? Can you give us that study today and can you tell us what percentage of extracurricular activity is still taking place? Can you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As you know, extracurricular activities by teachers was and is something that is voluntary. We have not asked boards to do—

**Mr Kennedy:** So you don't know.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, wait. We've not asked boards to do regular reports.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, it's a simple question, Minister, and you're playing around with us

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We do not do regular studies of extracurricular as part of reporting.

**Mr Kennedy:** I think that's shameful, Minister. I think it's shameful that you would not.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We'd be quite happy on the recommendation of the honourable member to certainly ask boards to do that.

**Mr Tascona:** Are you going to get control of these hearings? He's interrupting her answer.

**Mr Kennedy:** I won't take an interruption from you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We don't do regular reports on voluntary activities.

**The Vice-Chair:** I think the time is up, Madam Minister.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you're afraid of giving us information.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, the time is up.

Mr Marchese, you have 20 minutes, and if I could get a little more order in the process it would make my job much easier.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Thank you, M. President. I'm with you. I'd like you to tell me when my time is running out, two minutes before, two or three.

**The Vice-Chair:** I'll give you a running clock.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Minister, I tell you, when you've done three turns, it gets awfully tiring. We need fresh blood in this place because the first-timers, they like it, they love it, it's exciting. For the second-timers, it gets tiring a little bit.

**Mr Stewart:** Are you going to get out, Rosie?

**Mr Marchese:** And the third-timers, I have to tell you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Should we be looking for a candidate?

**Mr Marchese:** I love it when you say, "Here are the facts?" I love that. That's why you say she's good, right? "Do you want to hear accurate information?" she says to Mr Kennedy. Because what Mr Kennedy's about to give is inaccurate, right? I love the language, the politics. That's why I say you're good, Minister. You're one of the better ones in this regard, I have to tell you. But I'm not about to engage in what's a fact or not, because we say one thing, you say the other. Who is the public going to believe?

What Kennedy suggests in terms of line-by-line comparisons would be great. We're not going to get this, so I'm not going to stretch that. I'm not, because ultimately I have faith in the electorate. I even have faith in the 30% of teachers who voted for you the last time around. I have faith that in the end they will know that their system is in trouble and they know the facts, right? We've disputed here, but they know the facts. So I'll leave it at that in terms of a statement in that regard, because here it's just a game. He's got figures, we've got figures, you've got figures, and at the end, who is the public to believe, except the ones who are active in the schools?

I'd love to be able to get civil servants to be independent in their opinions. It would be wonderful. Don't



you think, Frank, that would be exciting, to have civil servants come here separate from the minister, to be able to give an opinion independent of the minister? It would be great. Or the other civil servants who are here who have to work for the minister and have to provide fixing information. It would be exciting. I know, Mr President, you agree with me. But that's another matter. We're not going to get that either.

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I've got a couple of questions. You talked about Fraser Mustard and his report, and you said his focus was very much a preschool focus. I like his preschool focus, because I think it's really good. My assumption is you do too, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Then you talked about all the other stuff you're doing—JK, up to grade 3, all the money you're giving, all the great stuff. But in terms of M. Mustard's report, I didn't quite hear or quite get what you are doing to implement that report, because I thought you and M. Harris, your boss, said, "We like it, we like him, we like what he has to say about that." But I'm not quite sure what you guys are doing with respect to that Mustard preschool report.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually, Mr Marchese, you might wish to address the issue to my colleague Minister Marland, the minister responsible for children, who could give you much greater detail. But we have, for example, the demonstration projects, the pilot projects that are out, in terms of the best model to implement Mustard. We'll be moving forward with that. I understand, in terms of some of his public pronouncements, Mr Mustard has been very encouraged by the work that is happening in that. There are a number of other programs. Healthy Babies, for example, is a wonderful program that this government instituted and expanded that helps to identify high-risk kids early. So there are a number of steps we have taken, and we need to and will take more—

**Mr Marchese:** You've got to do more, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —as the Premier said we would.

**Mr Marchese:** I suggest that you implement as quickly as you possibly can, rather than by way of demonstrations, because demonstration projects—yes, that's what you've got to do as a government, but I recommend to you that if you really want to do prevention, in terms of the work that teachers have to deal with once the problem is in the system, then you do that in the preschool years. That's really where you've got to do the work.

I never hear you folks, you Tories, talk about prevention. But that's where you've got to focus the energies on. New Democrats were going to move on that, and that's something you might want to move on as quickly as you possibly can. I say that as a statement and don't expect an answer.

You talked about reporting as being an accountability expectation on your behalf. I think reporting is good. It's one way of making yourself accountable, no doubt. I

think it's one-way, though. When you communicate to them, it's one-way communication.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, it's two-way?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** They're able to communicate with you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, that's interesting. When we took Bill 74 out, we had one day and a half. Do you remember that? People were complaining. We felt we needed greater accountability of your government. My view is that accountability is making sure you have plenty of time when you introduce a very litigious, quarrelsome bill, a divisive bill, a hurtful bill, that you would give those people who are about to be whacked an opportunity to respond, including parents and others who are connected to the education system.

If you believe so much in accountability—because you articulated that word so many times; here in the House Mike Harris uses it a lot—don't you think there would have been something of an expectation to give people an opportunity to respond and for you to make yourself more accountable by giving them hearings of a couple of weeks or more? Do you think that's a good idea? Do you think that's a way of making yourself accountable? If you do, why wouldn't you have more than just one day and an afternoon?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, I don't believe that consultation on any issue should simply be restricted to a committee hearing, and this one wasn't.

**Mr Marchese:** You don't believe it should be restricted to maybe a hearing on this one?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** To simply committee hearings. There is much consultation that goes on. For example, I've met with many groups and our education partners and continue to do that. We have many written submissions.

**Mr Marchese:** I hear you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's not simply limited to public hearings.

**Mr Marchese:** So you don't believe in mini-hearings. That's good.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's more than that.

**Mr Marchese:** Right, it's more than that. Your other answer is that you already went to consult with them in advance of the bill, so having done so you're saying there was plenty of consultation on Bill 74. Is that what you're saying, more or less?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I find that a person's definition of consultation can sometimes depend on their opinion of the action that any government is taking, as you'll well know from your time in office. But I don't think consultation is limited to simply public hearings, and there were other steps that were taken on Bill 74.

**Mr Marchese:** I think it's great. I'm trying to get to that in terms of what other steps you took. You said you don't believe mini-hearings are the only way. I agree. I think we need more than mini-hearings. But I'd like to

know from you, once you introduced Bill 74, what else you did to consult those affected.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There were many written submissions.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, yes. You read them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There were meetings that I had with different stakeholders. Staff had meetings, and some of my MPP colleagues who were part of my advisory committee from caucus had meetings with many individuals.

**Mr Marchese:** That's great.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So there were other things that happened as well. I agree that at the end of the day there certainly was not a consensus around the legislation. At the same time, I had been very clear about the need to move in all of those areas.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm glad you already went there. You're quite right.

Anyway, it was good to hear you on this, for the record, because there are going to be a lot of people, you know those activist types, who want to know what you said about some things, so it's interesting, your answer to this with respect to how you make yourself accountable.

I've got a couple of other questions.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Can I make just one observation? Mr Marchese, every time you and I stand up in the Legislature, every time you and I walk out to a public meeting, every time you and I walk out to a media scrum, you and I are accountable to the people who put us here—

**Mr Marchese:** Absolutely. I agree.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —and that is as it should be, and I take that very seriously.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure, me too, absolutely. That's why I speak in the House as often as I can, because they see us working. Absolutely, you're quite right.

I just think that when you take out a bill, introduce a bill, Bill 74, as divisive as it was, the people were entitled to a couple of weeks of hearings, I really do. I believe you do too, and do you know what? I think you didn't want to get whacked by the supporters of teachers and teachers, in terms of what you presented there. That's what I think.

On the question of trustees, last year you spoke glowingly about trustees. You said, "They're there because they care very much about education." You still believe that, don't you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** I thought you would. You also said they were knowledgeable about education, right? You still believe that, right?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, for sure. Why, then, would you fine trustees \$5,000 and forbid them from running for public office if they disagree with you with respect to Bill 74?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We don't. That's not what the legislation says.

**Mr Marchese:** That's what the legislation says.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, with all due respect, Mr Marchese, what it says is that a school board trustee, just

like an MPP or an MP, is not allowed to break the law. So a school board trustee may well disagree with the government of the day.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, so they could do that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly they can.

**Mr Marchese:** They could say whatever they like with respect to whatever you've done, whatever you pass.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And they do. As you may have noticed, they continue to express views for and against.

**Mr Marchese:** That's good to know. I'm going to pass that on to the trustees.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That would be helpful, actually, because there has been misinformation about what Bill 74 does—

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, for sure.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —because it does not say that.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, so they're only going to get fined \$5,000 and be forbidden from running for office if they break the law?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Which law? What would that breach be? Can you give me an example of what it is they might do for which they would be fined and/or fired?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Education legislation lays out, as it always has and again as it did when your party was in power—let's take, for example, a requirement that was in place when your government was in power that school boards are not allowed to run a deficit. So they are required, as you and I are in our personal budgets, small business owners, people who run organizations, to live within their means. They are not allowed to run deficits. So school board trustees who deliberately make decisions to do that might be culpable for a penalty—might be.

**Mr Marchese:** "Might," good; not necessarily.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Because I'm not the one who makes that determination.

**Mr Marchese:** Who would?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Bill 74 in no way interferes with trustees' ability to express their views.

**Mr Marchese:** That's good to know. If they pass a motion at the board level saying they disagree profoundly with aspects of Bill 74, the entire Bill 74, that's OK?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And many did.

**Mr Marchese:** Many did, and they could continue to do so, and they wouldn't be in violation of Bill 74 if they passed such motions?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Of course not. It's called freedom of speech, and the last time I checked—

**Mr Marchese:** I love that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —it still exists in this country.

**Mr Marchese:** Mercifully, thank God. Wait until the Alliance gets elected. Who knows what's going to happen then.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Even for the NDP.

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**Mr Marchese:** OK, moving on. I've got a few other questions, because time is running. How many minutes do we have?



**The Vice-Chair:** You've got about seven minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** The Safe Schools Act gives you powers that some of us believe are like police powers. You've given yourself the right to collect private and personal information. No?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's a good question, actually, Mr Marchese. That allows us to do criminal reference checks, and there is nothing in that legislation that in any way breaks any of the freedom of information and privacy laws which we in government must continue to abide by.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. So this information that can be collected in terms of criminal reference checks is just to do with teachers, students? Who does it deal with?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It deals with board employees.

**Mr Marchese:** Anyone, really, right? Essentially?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That is the enabling section that would allow us to institute a criminal reference check for board employees. That is something, again, that is a commitment we said we would do. We're doing the work now to do it. But again, because I think it's an important question you ask, the Information and Privacy Commissioner is part of the deliberations in terms of how that legislation is worded and how it will be implemented to ensure that something untoward is not occurring.

**Mr Marchese:** It's good to know you're working with that person. You collect information on matters of race as well. Is that not correct?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** You don't collect that information? Deputy, help us out whenever you think you know something I said—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. Why would we?

**Mr Marchese:** So there's no collection of information based on race?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Not that I'm aware of. There would be no reason for that to be part of education quality.

**Mr Marchese:** That's good. OK.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But why would you ask that question, Mr Marchese?

**Mr Marchese:** I'm just curious to see whether or not you would be collecting such information where the school board will—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But why would we?

**Mr Marchese:** Because we think that perhaps you might.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Why? That's not what that legislation says.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, that's good.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what we've ever said, so I think it is not helpful to raise inflammatory issues.

**Mr Marchese:** That's fine, Minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** I think Mr Marchese is happy with your answer.

**Mr Marchese:** You don't collect information on national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Again, what has that got to do with safe schools? This is for criminal reference checks.

**Mr Marchese:** That's fine—just to be sure. So in terms of personal correspondence, we wouldn't check that. If we did, in terms of students corresponding with each other or teachers or other board members—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Again, why would I want that? Why would the bureaucrats want that? I understand that some of our critics are trying to turn this into something it is not.

**Mr Marchese:** Good God, no.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm not saying you are; you're asking questions. But no, there is nothing in this legislation that would allow us to do it and there is no reason for us to have that.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, thank you very much. We're putting you on the record so that we know and that it's clear.

Moving on to other questions, because I don't think we're going to get another chance, in terms of fuel costs: we anticipate there are going to be greater fuel costs in the next little while, this winter. So I'm a bit worried because I think some boards are worried about fuel costs in terms of transportation, keeping schools heated and all that. It's going to cost a few more bucks. Do you have any plans to help out?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We've already provided an additional \$23 million to boards specifically for transportation. Fuel cost was one of the reasons we did that. We are now working with boards to do the work for the transportation grant in the future because we know it's not working as well as it should be. So that will be part of the deliberations.

**Mr Marchese:** So some of the \$23 million for transportation includes fuel costs, so they'll be very happy.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The boards can use it for transportation, however they want.

**Mr Marchese:** I see. And in terms of heating schools, it's going to cost more. Will there be some support for them or will they be able to manage with their existing dollars?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We haven't had any concerns expressed about that, as I'm aware to date. If there are, we'll certainly be prepared to take a look.

**Mr Marchese:** But if there are, you'll talk to them.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Because we are also looking at how we fund accommodation, and that would be part of it, for upcoming school years.

**Mr Marchese:** The Toronto board has a problem with playgrounds. You passed some strict standards they should be abiding by.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** There were standards that boards had to abide by.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. There were no standards that were put out? I don't remember the exact terminology of the standards.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. The Canadian Standards Association put out guidelines or standards for playground equipment. School boards have the responsibility to make appropriate decisions as to health and safety.



**Mr Marchese:** Fine. I've got a question. The board has a problem. It tore some of those down, perhaps wrongly. I'm not interested in blame; I'm interested in playgrounds. I'm assuming you think it should be a right to have safe playgrounds. They put \$3 million and they need \$9 million more. How do we deal with the question that they ought to have a right to a safe playground that they do not have? Parents are not interested in assigning blame. They want help to get those things. Are you going to help?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The school board already receives monies for accommodation, school renewal. They can use those dollars for playgrounds. The school board is also in the process, as you know, of looking at revenues from the sale or lease of school properties. Again, they are free to use that money as they see fit within the budget. I don't think when many other school boards are managing this same issue in a different fashion—

**Mr Marchese:** So kids have a right to safe playgrounds, but if the board doesn't have enough money, too bad, more or less?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. School boards have always been responsible for safety, accommodation, equipment—

**Mr Marchese:** I hear you; I understand.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They remain that way, and I don't think we should be giving one board special treatment when other boards are managing.

**Mr Marchese:** So kids don't have playgrounds—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Toronto also has extra money that they received that other boards didn't.

**Mr Marchese:** So if kids don't have the playgrounds, too bad. The board isn't simply finding the dollars that are there for the playgrounds, essentially?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** On the one hand you criticize the government for not allowing school boards to make decisions, and when they make a decision that the community has concerns about, now you want me to second-guess that school board's decision. You can't have it both ways.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes. Poor kids can't have it both ways. You're quite right.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Marchese. Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, I found it passing interesting that Mr Kennedy of the Liberals made his comparison here. I know he's going to want to go running out to the media very shortly with his analysis. I just want to point out that under his government the separate school board in Waterloo region received something in the area of \$1,300 per student less in funding than the public school board did. That was in the Waterloo region, Mr Kennedy. So you talk about the reduction in funding. I want to assure you that in Waterloo region the separate school board is now getting considerably more money than they did in the past. In fact, now they are being funded on an equal basis per student as the public school board, and I haven't heard any complaints from the separate school board. In fact, the separate school board two years ago—

**Mr Kennedy:** They're both lower, Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's my time. You keep it buttoned.

Madam Minister, the separate school board came to me two years ago and complimented us on the fact that they had received additional funding. Do you know something else? The separate school teachers are receiving parity in wages. Isn't that interesting? Under his government they were receiving considerably less. So I love how he pontificates and I love the spin he puts on it and the fancy words he uses like "disguise" and "camouflage." I'd like to say that the same thing happened in his government. Maybe that's why he's so familiar with those words.

The school boards have talked about cuts in ESL. They've talked about cuts in special ed. I know that in Waterloo region we're getting considerably more money now to both ESL and special ed. I would like to address, however, the question of ESL.

Waterloo region receives the fourth-largest number of immigrants—I'm not talking about percentages; I'm talking about number of immigrants—in all of Canada. That's behind only Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto. In addition, Waterloo region has another situation which is probably unlike any other region in Canada, and that is that it has a rather large percentage of students who are Mennonites, and German is their first language. They come to school with almost no knowledge of English. So it puts a bit of a strain on the ESL resources of the school board. I know that we have received additional funding. I wonder if you could give me the numbers in terms of additional funding that we received this year over and above what the projected formula was, and if you could tell me if you have any plans in that area for next year.

1710

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we have worked with your school board to examine that data and we're just checking with one of my officials in terms of what the outcome—I'm not sure what the resolution of that is, to see what the data is showing.

I can't say where we'll be for next year on the grant or the English-as-a-second-language portion. We're doing that work this fall through the normal process to make the announcement next spring. But the one thing I should say is there is \$20 million more available this year for school boards and, again, I'm not sure, just off the top, if your board received more this year.

I'd like to introduce Nancy Naylor from the ministry, who would like to provide some more information on your question, Mr Wettlaufer.

**Ms Nancy Naylor:** Thank you very much, Minister. I just wanted to add a little bit more information, specifically about the Mennonite issue because we did have conversations with the Waterloo board. They brought that issue to our attention.

**The Vice-Chair:** Could you just identify your name and position?

**Ms Naylor:** Certainly. I'm Nancy Naylor. I'm the director of the education finance branch in the Ministry of Education.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thanks.

**Ms Naylor:** Sorry, I just can't see you very well. It's dazzling to be here.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's the idea.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's blinding.

**Mr Marchese:** Keep the light shining in.

**Ms Naylor:** Specifically, with the issue of the Mennonites, the Waterloo board had brought that to our attention and it was of great interest to us because part of the funding that's provided to boards for the English-as-a-second-language grant is in respect of students who might have been born in Canada but who arrive in the classroom without a good command of either English or French. So we do provide a proportion of the grant in recognition of that and we use Statistics Canada data to help assess the number of families whose first language in their household is not English or French.

With respect to the Mennonite issue, when it was brought to our attention by the Waterloo board, we did contact Statistics Canada and through an exchange of correspondence they agreed to take on a special study for us, to reassess their census methodology to make sure that they hadn't underrepresented the Mennonite community. There was a concern that those families were perhaps more averse to filling out census forms than other households. StatsCan did a special two-week study for us and they did write back and confirm that they felt that their review established that they were adequately representing the Mennonite community. We are capturing that.

That said, we have upped the funding. The government has increased the funding in the Canadian-born students portion of the ESL grant for two years in a row in response to the concerns of the school board and we're continuing to work with them to look at how that funding can be made most responsive to the need that shows up in their student population.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I appreciate that response. Thank you very much. It's very important to me and to the people of my riding that the dialogue is continuing with the board.

**Mr Stewart:** I want to go to special education. Just recently I had a call from a parent whose youngster had gone through the various criteria to get special education funding etc. What she had been told was that this young fellow met all the criteria but when his name went to Queen's Park and the board of education, they took a look and said, "OK, Connor doesn't get any." That's the comment that was made to this particular person. I guess for my own information, can you just elaborate on how the criteria sit and how they work for that special education funding?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, Mr Stewart, I'm going to ask Aryeh Gitterman from the ministry to talk about where we are in terms of those criteria and the improvements that we've made this year.

**Mr Aryeh Gitterman:** Aryeh Gitterman, director of the policy and program branch.

The criteria for the process of ISA funding as part of the special education grant were set originally with input from a variety of organizations, including representatives

from special education groups. They are meant to assist in defining a mechanism for us to determine the incidence of special needs in school boards, so that whether or not a student's particular situation meets the criteria does not determine whether or not that student receives special education programs. That determination is made by the school board, not by a file and not by a review of that file by an individual.

**Mr Stewart:** Thank you for verifying that. I did give her the right answer, which is great. But if they meet the criteria, then are they funded accordingly? Let's say, if a board has 25 kids who need ISA funding and they've met all the criteria, are the boards then funded on those 25 kids?

**Ms Sue Herbert:** We use the finding to factor in a funding formula. Because the children who are reviewed generally are of very high need and their supports are costly, and because we also know that there's no pattern across the province for the kind of disability in different school boards and that the pattern shifts, we had to find a formula that was based on actual need. In fact, we know this from the results. Across the province particular communities have different kinds of special-needs children and so just funding on a per capita basis doesn't capture true need in local areas. So we use this process to establish a funding rate and then within that rate the boards themselves make the decisions, with their parents, about what kinds of servicethose children need and at what funding level.

Though it often gets portrayed as an approval process for each individual child, it's not. It's a way to establish a fair and equitable approach to funding what are individual requirements, for which you cannot just establish a standardized formula across the province.

We know, for example, that in particular communities there may be a very high rate of children with multiple handicaps and that level of multiple handicaps may vary over five or 10 years. It may vary if three families move out of a community and to a different board. We have to be able to capture those variances because we can't find a way to establish a single pattern across the province.

So that's my long-worded answer for saying that we use it to establish a funding formula that reflects the need in that board, but the actual services and the money that supports those services are held within the board to make the decisions for each child.

**The Acting Chair (Mr Steve Peters):** I'll come right to you. For the record, could you please identify yourself and your position?

**Ms Herbert:** Sorry, I'm Sue Herbert, I'm the deputy of education.

**Mr Stewart:** Just a clarification. So the money then is in the pot. It is then the board's decision to assess the kids on the criteria that have been established to get them funded.

**Ms Herbert:** To make sure that they have the adequate services.

**Mr Stewart:** Sorry, to get the adequate services that they would require.



**Ms Herbert:** And that's done through an individual education plan, for which this year the government has set new standards about what has to be in an individual education plan and the involvement of parents in establishing an individual education plan.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Something that might assist you, Mr Stewart, because it helped with me, is that a child may well fall into a particular box that says—for the sake of argument I'll pick a number out of the hat—\$10,000. The actual supports that child may need during that year may be \$5,000 or \$15,000. The process we go through, as the deputy said, is to sort of give a rate for the board, but it is not to be used to determine whether that child gets any service or what service they get. We're trying to ensure that the decision around a child is based on the child's individual education needs, which may vary, and that the funding process is the funding process. It's giving money to boards in a way that reflects need but shouldn't be driving the program for that particular individual student.

**Mr Stewart:** Thank you.

1720

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, certainly feel free to put this question to anybody from your civil service you feel comfortable with. I met with the Thames Valley school board, and I believe Mr Peters was at that meeting. The superintendent in charge of their business department said that under the old system the increase they received this year would have required a double-digit mill rate increase. You can imagine the appetite of the local taxpayers for that, where a school board would have to raise taxes in the double digits to get the increase they did. With some of the changes we continually hear, "You've gutted this and you've taken this out." Can you explain how a superintendent in charge of their business department can tell you clearly that they are receiving the equivalent of a double-digit rate increase under this new system?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The way we fund boards is according to the needs they have. This is one of the reasons we changed the formula. You had some boards, say, in poorer communities with very low property tax assessment bases, and they just didn't have the money; whether they needed it or not, they just couldn't get it from property tax for a child's education. By having a system that's more equitable, boards in poor areas, if I can phrase it that way, have seen significant increases in the amount of resources they have for their children, because it is a more equitable formula.

We spent considerable time trying to make sure we set those numbers at the appropriate level. We did a lot of work asking boards, "What do you spend today on X?" to do the research to drive the policy decisions about where to set that funding. It is interesting: I hadn't actually heard from the Thames Valley board that that's what it would have meant if they had tried to obtain the funding on their own resources.

**Mr Tascona:** Minister, I've heard many times from parents and students in my constituency that they are concerned about safety in their schools. I myself have

been shocked by things I've heard from my constituents about events in their schools. I believe it is important that young people today are aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights. Can you tell us what this government is doing to ensure a safer school environment for all the people involved in the education system?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** This is a very important initiative that we spent considerable time on before the last election doing consultations with our education partners, and parents included in that, and said last year as part of our commitment to voters that should we be re-elected we would institute safe schools code-of-conduct initiatives. We are indeed doing that. We've started with the code of conduct, the set of behavioural rules for students. For example, for students who are bringing drugs and alcohol to school or threatening or harassing teachers, there are mandatory suspension and expulsion penalties. We have given principals increased authority to expel a student. We have given teachers the authority to suspend for up to one day. Before, teachers had no authority in terms of suspensions. Not only are there mandatory rules, but also consequences for not abiding by those rules. Within that framework, school boards are developing their own codes of conduct for local infractions, if you will, or issues they think are important. Frankly, many boards already had codes like this, though some didn't. We now require that all boards have codes.

It will also provide for criminal reference checks of board employees as an added safety feature. It gives principals increased authority to remove strangers from school property and increases trespass fines. It will allow parents to decide to have school uniforms or a dress code. All these things are designed to promote more respect and responsibility—good citizenship values—in our schools.

I had the privilege of going to one school here in Toronto that had had serious behavioural problems, violence and people coming on to school property. Their academic achievement had suffered. I was quite impressed when they talked about how they had turned themselves around, because the teachers and parents said, "This is not what we want. We want to change this." Their code of conduct, dress code, all the rules—actually, at the beginning of every year in this particular school, the parents, students and teachers have almost a contract, I would call it, where the teacher has obligations in terms of teaching and helping the student, the student has obligations in terms of doing homework and coming to school prepared and the parent has obligations. They think it's so important that they go through this process at the beginning of every year. We heard very clearly that our classrooms need to be safer, and this has been a series of steps we've been taking to do that.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I'll keep it very short. My daughter this year will be doing grade 3 testing. What can I expect?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think many teachers work very hard to prepare young students for that, so they know this isn't necessarily a personal assessment of that student.



It's designed for school boards and schools and the ministry to judge the system in terms of how well we're doing. You as a parent certainly have the right to see that information. It is a helpful tool for you and the teacher to ensure that your daughter is doing appropriately. If there is a problem, you and the teacher know about it so you can work to fix it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy has 20 minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want to come back where we left off. You were indicating that you weren't at all prepared to entertain changing your mind on Bill 74; you didn't see any point to that. You also didn't indicate in any positive sense that you were prepared to give additional funds to help alleviate the problem in the schools. Do you acknowledge there is chaos in the education system right now, that there are significant, large—that a majority of schools are missing activities and having difficulty under your imposed staffing regime? Do you acknowledge that difficulty is out there, or do you have a different version of events?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, Mr Kennedy, there is not chaos in the system. There are literally thousands of schools and thousands of teachers who are providing extracurricular activities for the students.

**Mr Kennedy:** Do you have any proof of that? Do you know? You told us before you didn't know.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, we know—

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chairman, are we going to go through this again? Why doesn't he let her answer? He shows no respect for anybody in this place except himself.

**Mr Kennedy:** The member opposite has had his own time and he used it—

**Mr Tascona:** The man doesn't even stop talking when he asks and she's trying to answer a question.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Do you want to chair it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we know that because school boards have told us. We also know there are communities where teachers are choosing not to provide those activities as a work-to-rule. We also know that in some of those communities, as the collective bargaining process continues—this kind of disruption during a collective bargaining process, unfortunate as it is, regrettable as it is, is something we have seen before when collective agreements were being renegotiated. That is occurring in some schools and in some boards as those collective agreements are being renegotiated.

**Mr Kennedy:** As you know, because I introduced it to you in the House, the Ontario principals' association did a survey and indicate that only 7.6% of schools have normal activities. So you've got problems to varying degrees in the balance of schools.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually—

**Mr Kennedy:** I wonder if I might pose the question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just very quickly, elementary teachers are not—

**Mr Kennedy:** This is not elementary; these are secondary schools.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** All right, then, let's be clear.

**Mr Kennedy:** Secondary schools. I was clear before and I'm happy to be clear now.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And public secondary schools, too, I think we need to be clear.

**Mr Kennedy:** These are secondary schools that have been canvassed by the Ontario principals' association.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Public or Catholic?

**Mr Kennedy:** They are public.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Again, not including Catholic. That's an important distinction.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm happy to put the question to you; I'm happy to give you a chance to answer. I would like to do that. You've got some 92% of schools in this particular run-up, and you have no figures. Incredibly, your ministry has no surveys they care to share with us today about what's happening to extracurricular activity. You forced us to have a law forcing extracurricular activity, potentially, but you have no idea, and you don't even have the interest to collect information on what's happening. So I'm telling you what one group is saying. They've canvassed schools, and 92% of those schools have problems with extracurricular activity.

1730

Minister, what is your plan to bring extracurricular activity back? Do you acknowledge that you are responsible in any way for the fact that this extracurricular activity is not taking place in 92% of the schools, according to Ontario principals?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, it's not 92% of schools, Mr Kennedy. That's why I asked—

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** Let the minister answer.

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chairman, let her answer. The man never stops talking. That's so rude.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Tascona—

**Mr Tascona:** You're the Chairman. Run the meeting.

**The Vice-Chair:** If you allow me to, I will.

**Mr Tascona:** Good.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Elementary teachers are providing extracurricular activities. In many Catholic high schools the teachers are providing extracurricular activities. Public-sector high schools are where the problem is focused. Again, it's only some schools, not all schools.

The reason we brought in things in Bill 74 to deal with extracurricular activities was because, from what we had seen in the last two years whenever there was a dispute, political or otherwise, between a union and a board, between a union and the government, extracurricular activities was one of those things that was withdrawn from students.

For many months I said to the teacher unions that parents did not find that acceptable, that if it was not an issue that was dealt with, we, as the government, would have to take steps. It was not dealt with. As a government, we took steps in 1974. The unions expressed their concern again that they didn't like the step we took in 1974. I said: "OK, we will not proclaim that portion. It was designed for province-wide actions. We will not

proclaim that." The good news is that many thousands of teachers are doing what they said they would do. Unfortunately, in some communities, they're choosing to do a work-to-rule.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, apparently you're guessing or you're wishing that things are well. You've got your head firmly plunked in the sand. You've mentioned Catholic boards. I have information that a majority of Catholic boards have no or only some extracurricular activity happening. I would be happy to see if you, with your staff, would care enough to check and see what's happening rather than blithely giving us assurances.

Minister, you didn't answer the second part of the question. Maybe it's not fair to ask—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We are in regular contact with school boards on this, Mr Kennedy.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, let Mr Kennedy finish.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want to know: Do you acknowledge that putting more work on to the teachers results in a reduction—

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chair, on a point of order.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Tascona, you're out of order.

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Kennedy, you're not running the meeting.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'd like to be able to pose my question.

**Mr Tascona:** A point of order.

**The Vice-Chair:** A point of order.

**Mr Tascona:** My friend over there continues to refer to some kind of document that he is using in his questioning. I think he should be allowing us to have a copy of whatever he's referring to. The last time he started referring to documents, he provided us with a copy on the last day. Now he's continually referring to something, and I'd like to have a copy. If he's got a copy, why doesn't he give us one?

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm not having this come out of my time. This is ridiculous.

**Mr Tascona:** It's a point of order, Mr Chairman. He provided it on the last day.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's not a point of order.

**Mr Tascona:** It's a point of procedure.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** I understand, Minister, that your friends opposite are afraid of this question and therefore they're trying to interrupt, but let's come back to the question and let's see if you aren't as afraid of it as the member from Simcoe, where you've cut funding some \$535 per student. I can see the member being nervous. He probably agrees with those cuts, but he's not prepared to really defend them.

Minister, again, are you able to give us an indication whether or not you agree that your new staffing formula, the one you imposed on Bill 74 around the province, is at least a contributing factor to the reduction in extracurricular activity that has taken place around the province? Do you acknowledge that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I think my colleague disagrees with the assumption of your comments; that's why he was objecting.

We were very clear on the workload standard that it was the government's intent to move forward with that as we said we would. We asked our education partners for advice on how to implement it in a better fashion. We took advice.

I agree that at the end of the day we do not agree on the steps we took. But we invested new monies, made the definition more flexible, if you will, so that it would be something that teachers and school boards could deal with. Again, it is something that's being dealt with across the country.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, with all respect, you are not addressing the question. When you gave the extra workload to teachers, did you not anticipate then, and do you not agree now, that one of the consequences of that is they have less time available for extracurricular, and therefore it is a contributing factor for the reduction in extracurricular that's being reported around the province, that has caused students to demonstrate, to leave schools, that has caused a significant amount of disruption? We have at least 27 communities where that has taken place so far.

Do you see a connection at all? Do you acknowledge a connection? I think it's fair that I ask you, yes or no, because you've taken up time talking about things, quite frankly, which don't directly relate to that question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, if you listen to the views expressed by most of the union leadership, they see the election of this government as something that is justifying their disruption of the education system.

**Mr Kennedy:** I went to Humberside Collegiate and I've been to another school. In those schools I followed teachers around. I also attended classes. I had round tables with teachers, with students. I spent about 11 hours at one school and about eight hours at another.

Minister, I'm wondering, what do you say to teachers who are trying right now to do extracurricular and who have on-calls? On-calls, for the benefit of people who don't go to school, means they've got to go into classes when somebody isn't there or some field trip takes them. They don't have any extra time. Their lunch time is what they're using to make up. When they're on four out of four, they're under a significant amount of stress and a significant amount of strain.

I want to illustrate one person for you. I can assure you it's a real person. I will be happy to bring her down if that would be necessary or even helpful. This person is a new four-year teacher. Her name is Stephanie. She starts her day at 6:30 because she has to photocopy all her own stuff. She comes in at 6:30 in the morning. She is an immersion teacher. She is teaching four out of four. She has to do preparation, because there is a new curriculum. She has to prep for each of those classes, and you realize that's not four different classes. In her particular school she's got eight different courses to teach. Sorry, she has seven because there is only one of the eight that



overlaps. She has to do all this preparation. She has to be responsive to her students. She has to make do with materials that don't work in terms of the French program in particular. She has to do this, and every single night she is putting in two and a half to three hours.

I've watched her in front of her class, and it was a very exhilarating thing to see the enthusiasm of the teacher. But I can tell you, Minister, it is waning. You imposed the burden on her. She would like to be involved in the extracurricular but she can't be, because she can't have any kind of personal life as it is now. She's single; other teachers have families.

Minister, I want to ask you again if you wouldn't do me and the people of Ontario the courtesy of answering the question. If you have made teachers teach more students, taken up more of their day, do you not agree that that then means that will reduce the amount of extracurricular that they can involve themselves in? Do you agree with that or not?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all I would like say that I know many Stephanies; not personally, but I know there are thousands of Stephanies out there who care about the kids, who work very hard. Every time I have a public opportunity to express that view, I do so.

When we set the workload standard we looked very carefully at what other provinces are doing so that we were not asking our teachers here in Ontario to do anything above and beyond that, and so we are not.

The other thing I think is interesting to note is that in the elementary panel, where the workload in terms of classroom is higher, those teachers are doing extracurricular. Secondly, in the high school panel, many teachers have different workloads and different responsibilities. A new teacher teaching new curriculum has a significant job. A teacher who is teaching a course they've taught before has a different kind of workload. So those workloads can and should vary.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, again, with the greatest of respect, you can't have it both ways. I'm sorry. You can't tell someone like Stephanie you have respect for her, dump a bunch of work on her, not give her any assistance with that, deny her from her extracurriculars and then take no responsibility for it. That's not accountability, Minister.

1740

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But that's not what we're doing.

**Mr Kennedy:** That is not accountability.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what we're doing, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** You've refused, given four opportunities, to acknowledge your government's role in the mess that's out there in this province's high schools. You've decided not to do that.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we have put in place extra supports for the teachers—

**Mr Kennedy:** You have not.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —because they need that support and we are funding that support. If there's more we can do I'm certainly prepared to talk to them about doing that—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm going to ask you another question. It's extremely disappointing that—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —because it's important support for them.

**The Vice-Chair:** We can't have two people speaking at the same time. It's Mr Kennedy's time.

**Mr Kennedy:** —there are parents out there, and students and teachers, who look to you for leadership. They see a problem out there and so far you don't even acknowledge (1) that the problem exists—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, that's not what I said.

**Mr Kennedy:** —or (2) that you're in a position to do something about it, because you refuse to take responsibility for having increased this workload and diminished people's access to both extracurricular and individualized attention to the students.

Minister, having done that, I still want to ask you, however, does your ministry, this \$14-billion-spending ministry—or \$13.9 billion you claim today, and I don't actually agree with that figure but we'll be happy to look at the details—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, \$13.5 billion, and that doesn't include other expenditures on top of that. That's simply property tax and grants to school boards.

**Mr Kennedy:** In all of that you apparently either lack the resources or the interest to look into the situation in terms of extracurricular activity. You have done no studies, you have no reports. You have nothing to demonstrate to us. I want to ask you a slightly related question because there's a hopeful possibility of an answer. So you've nothing to show extracurricular conditions in this province. Even though you're the minister and you spend a lot of your time talking about it, you have no studies. I think that's embarrassing, Minister. I'm sorry for you. But let me—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a minute, Mr Kennedy. We are in regular contact with school boards in terms of what is or is not occurring in their community as part of the information we collect on the collective bargaining process.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've asked this already and I'll ask it again: Do you have a report or a study on the status now or before of extracurricular activities?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If you would like us to officially require school boards to file extracurricular reports—we ask information from school boards—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm sorry, it's laughable the way you're wasting my time, because you can't again have it both ways.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We don't require school boards to officially report.

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chairman, why do you allow him to act that rudely?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister—



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We can do that if you would like, Mr Kennedy. But to portray—

**Mr Kennedy:** It's laughable, but it's not funny, I'll tell you that.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order, order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —that somehow or other—

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to come back to, and ask you about—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chairman, cut him off.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

I want to ask you again about the impact—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Mr Chair, I do have a point of order.

**The Vice-Chair:** What's your point of order?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Under the Speaker's ruling on June 21, 2000, the Speaker said, re responses, "The member whose question is being answered may not agree that the response is what he or she wishes to hear, but the goodwill nature of the response from ministry staff must be taken at face value."

Mr Chair, I think it is up to you to ensure that the minister or the ministry staff be allowed to answer a question that is being asked by the member.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, this is estimates and there are exchanges that are a little more—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** This was referring to estimates.

**The Vice-Chair:** May I respond? I gave you your chance. The fact is that there are exchanges. I myself find it kind of healthy in a way. The fact is, the less disruption I get from the other parties so that they can have some exchange here, that's fine. If I find that they're wasting the time, then I will rule on that. I know that we'd like to get some answers if he asked a question, but if Mr Kennedy wants to ask questions without giving time for the minister to answer, that's his loss, because after 20 minutes I'll cut his time.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Then let me—

**The Vice-Chair:** So it wasn't a point of order—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Mr Chair, this is a point of order.

**The Vice-Chair:** I told you it wasn't a point of order.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** The Speaker also ruled, "The Chair must ensure not only that there's an opportunity for oral questions to be offered and asked by the committee, but also that the answers are to be on topic and do not unduly consume the time of the committee."

**Mr Kennedy:** That would be nice.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Mr Chair, how would we know if they are on topic or not when the member opposite refuses to allow the minister to answer?

**The Vice-Chair:** As I said, he has 20 minutes in which to have an exchange in his time. He can conduct it any way he wants. If he doesn't want to allow the minister to respond within that time that's his prerogative. I find that sometimes the exchanges are quite healthy. We get some answers. If I had a point of view, where would it go? May I proceed now?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Sorry, Chair. I'm going to appeal that ruling to the Speaker.

**The Vice-Chair:** You can do that. You can appeal the ruling, and we'll get back to that.

**Mr Kennedy:** You make yourself look silly, Mr Wettlaufer. You quoted it completely out of context.

**The Vice-Chair:** So you're appealing my ruling and you want to take it to the Speaker.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, I am.

**The Vice-Chair:** My understanding is that I am to ask for a vote if we should carry this to the Speaker for the appeal. That's the procedure.

**Mr Marchese:** Are you appealing his ruling?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm appealing the ruling.

**The Vice-Chair:** May we take a vote now then?

**Mr Tascona:** What was the ruling?

**The Vice-Chair:** My ruling was that the question you raised wasn't a point of order.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Tascona:** The Chairman is speaking to me.

**The Vice-Chair:** I said that the minister may respond if she wishes. If Mr Kennedy wants to continue for 20 minutes within his time and not allow the minister to answer, that's fine.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's not what you said, Chair. You said "If the member does not want to allow the minister to answer the question." But the Speaker ruled—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, that's what I said. If he doesn't want to allow the minister to answer the question in the 20 minutes, that's his prerogative. You're questioning my ruling on that.

**Mr Tascona:** Just one point, Mr Chair: In that ruling, it was held that "Where the Chair feels the discussion has reached an unproductive point or the time being taken is unduly wasteful of the time apportioned to a particular member, the Chair must interrupt and move the discussion along"—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Chairman, are you listening to me? Thank you—"in the interest of fairness to all the members of the committee.... It is not to the Chair to do so based on his or her own views about the matter being discussed." I just want to bring that to your attention because that might help you.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me tell you what might be helpful to you. It is my discretion to have that called. If you want to challenge that—

**Mr Tascona:** No, I'm just telling you. I didn't challenge you, he did. I just raised—

**Vice-Chair:** You did challenge it, and then I said we would put it to a vote. Is that OK?

**Mr Tascona:** No. Did you listen to what I just said?

**Vice-Chair:** I listened completely to what you just said.

**Mr Tascona:** OK. That's all I wanted you to know.

**Mr Marchese:** Chair, you have made a ruling. Joe is repeating much of what was already said.

**Vice-Chair:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Is Mr Wettlaufer challenging the Chair? That's the question.

**Mr Tascona:** That's what I wanted to know, what the challenge was.

**Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer, are you challenging?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** If I interpreted you correctly, that Mr Kennedy does not have to permit the minister to answer the question, that is what I'm challenging.

**Vice-Chair:** You're challenging that, and I'm going to put it to the vote now.

**Mr Tascona:** What are we voting on?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** What do you mean—

**Vice-Chair:** You challenged my ruling. As you expressed, my ruling is that Mr Kennedy can speak for his 20 minutes and not allow the minister to answer the question.

**Mr Tascona:** What's the point of having a hearing?

**Mr Marchese:** If he doesn't like the answer, he doesn't have to listen to the minister for—

**Mr Tascona:** He won't let her answer.

**Mr Marchese:** If he doesn't like the answer, he's saying, "I don't like the answer," and he moves on.

**Vice-Chair:** Order. Are we going to have a discussion across? Mr Wettlaufer, would you like to withdraw your—

**Mr Marchese:** Just withdraw it, Wayne.

**Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, could you—

**Mr Marchese:** I'm just trying to help you.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's not coming out of my time, so you're wasting your time.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's obvious we can't win a vote because there are three on that side, three on this side, and you're the Chair.

**Vice-Chair:** Are you withdrawing?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** So I will withdraw the challenge only on the basis that we can't win.

**Vice-Chair:** You have withdrawn. Mr Kennedy, you may proceed. You've got six minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thanks, Mr Chair. I just want to say I don't share the view of the members opposite that the minister needs all this assistance to defend herself, because she really doesn't. She doesn't answer the questions, but that is her prerogative.

Minister, I want to ask you again about the staffing formula that you've imposed. You have denied that it affects extracurricular. I think that's unfortunate on your part. I think it undermines your credibility. But I want to ask you about some of the other effects it has. Pushing those hours on to teachers has a number of effects. I want to ask you particularly about your view, as the Minister of Education, on the team teaching that's taking place all across the province now. That means that students who used to have the benefit of one teaching professional working with them, seeing them on a constant basis, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, turning them into better students, now have to deal with two, and in extreme cases maybe as many as four, teachers over the course of the year, because it's the only way your silly staffing formula can work in a whole host of schools. There are huge numbers of schools where this is taking place. I want to ask you whether you agree with

the practice. It's taking place in Humberside, it's taking place in Archbishop Romero school, and I can give you other examples. But what I want you to respond to is your view and the ministry's view of the team teaching that's being done as a direct result of your change in the staffing formula. Do you agree with it? That's all I would like you to address, please.

**1750**

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we do not impose the staffing formula. That is something the boards and the unions negotiate. We do not impose that. We talk about an instructional time standard, which can be implemented in any number of ways. Norbert Hartmann would be quite happy to talk to you about our view on team teaching.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want to ask you about team teaching. Will you tell me whether you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, I was just saying to you that Mr Hartmann is quite prepared to talk to you about team teaching until you interrupted me. If you'd like to hear about it, Mr Hartmann is here to talk about it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want your opinion—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Mr Kennedy, would you like Mr Hartmann to respond?

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to ask the minister: Mr Hartmann is a very competent bureaucrat, I'm sure, but, Minister, to be clear—

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: You directly asked Mr Kennedy a question and—

**Mr Kennedy:** It's amazing how afraid these people are of an answer. It's incredible.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, you're in control. You've asked him a specific question.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Mazzilli, Mr Wettlaufer and Mr Tascona are all afraid. I can't get over it.

**The Vice-Chair:** May I have all the discussion end? It comes through the Chair. Stop having this crosstalk. You did raise a point of order. Let me address that, before you put two or three more. You raised one point of order, let me address that.

As I said, he asked a question and the minister said she'd ask somebody to respond. Mr Kennedy proceeded. It doesn't seem like he wants the response. That's his prerogative. If he doesn't want the answer, he's got two more minutes to go.

**Mr Kennedy:** Chair, with respect, my question was the minister's opinion. I don't want the minister's opinion from someone else. With all due respect, I don't. I would like the minister's opinion. If she's saying today to the parents who have expressed their concern that she doesn't have an opinion on the increased incidence of team teaching out there, where students are being compelled to work with two and sometimes four teachers per subject, where they used to have one—if you don't have an opinion on that, Minister, then, no, I don't need any further information. I think it's a sad thing if you personally don't have an opinion about the increase in team teaching.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Team teaching, if done appropriately, can be a very helpful thing for students. But if you are asking me to voice an opinion and a criticism on how a local collective union and a school board are implementing workload standards, they have choices. If they have chosen to implement it in a way that is not benefiting students, of course I would disagree with that.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you're being too oblique by half. You're the ones who say it's 6.5. You're the ones who make it unworkable with everyday schedules. You can't take a half; you've got to give it as a whole course to somebody at one time.

Minister, I want to move on—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we could go back to 6.67, but you said before that we hadn't made a change in response to concerns. We did make the change.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I insist on having this time available. I've got the clowns across, acting on your behalf, and that's fine. If they want to waste the public's time with their antics, that's fine.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I would ask that he withdraw that.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're all making so much noise I don't know what I'm going to ask him to withdraw. I didn't hear it.

**Mr Tascona:** It was rude.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Mr Chair, he called us clowns.

**Mr Kennedy:** If there's anything—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, you've got about 30 seconds to wrap up.

**Mr Kennedy:** I don't want to address them. I would like to address the minister.

Minister, I want to know whether you agree that the morale of teachers is directly impacted by the workload you've put on them, the way you are intransigent about changes and the fact that you're not providing the flexibility to change things. Do you not agree, do you acknowledge at all, is there any part of you that you'd like to put on the record today that says you have helped lessen the morale of teachers in this province and that you feel responsible and are prepared to do something about it? Do you personally believe that some of these measures of yours have impacted and lessened teacher morale and made the learning environment less effective?

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Kennedy. You have not left any time for the minister to respond.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: When there are interjections from any other member of the committee, is that—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, points of order are always called at the nearest time. I also allowed some extension in the time, if you noticed. I did give some extension. Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Chair, if it's all right with you, I would like to adjourn for the day and reconvene the next day. I think I need a break and everybody else needs a break. Is that all right with you?

**Mr Tascona:** We don't need a break.

**Mr Marchese:** Is that all right with you?

**The Vice-Chair:** I'll just ask for agreement. Would you like us to adjourn? We have five minutes to go. Is that OK?

**Mr Tascona:** Let him use his time.

**Mr Marchese:** All right.

**The Vice-Chair:** We did not get unanimous consent. Would you proceed with your five minutes. You have 20 minutes, and we have hearings on Tuesday.

**Mr Marchese:** If only the public could witness some of these things, it would be more than fun. It's pretty stupid what they do at times. Anyway, to continue with the questioning—I've got a couple of minutes, I guess.

On the issue of playgrounds, Minister, do you believe it ought to be a right for children to have a playground and, secondly, to have a safe playground?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I do believe children need safe places to play.

**Mr Marchese:** At the moment the Toronto board doesn't have playgrounds in many schools. Children are therefore being denied that right to a playground. Would you agree?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are certainly communities where the school playgrounds have been torn down by the board before they had any idea, as I understand it, as to how they were going to replace them for the children.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you believe that kids have the right to playgrounds?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Define "right," I guess. I think kids should have places to play and should have safe places to play as part of it.

**Mr Marchese:** Forget "right." If "right" is too strong a word for you, that's fine. They should have a playground.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Students should.

**Mr Marchese:** Your view, in spite of the fact you think they ought to have a playground, is that this is the responsibility of the board. Correct?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It always has been.

**Mr Marchese:** The board said, "We have \$3 million." They need another \$9 million. Do I understand you correctly to say that if the board doesn't have the other \$9 million, they'd better find it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I understand it, they had \$3 million from some kind of surplus. That was the way it was described. I was surprised, after what they had said, that they had a surplus. But it is up to school boards, within the funding they are allocated. The Toronto school board has indeed received additional monies in a number of categories over and above what other school boards have received. It is their mandate—and that's not new—to make those decisions. Those trustees are elected to do that, much as it can distress you and me when we see the outcome of that kind of decision some days.

**Mr Marchese:** You feel bad, don't you, that the kids don't have a playground? You do feel bad, don't you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think that children should be provided with the opportunities they need to learn, to grow and to succeed.



**Mr Marchese:** I agree with you, and you feel bad that they don't have one, don't you?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Certainly I don't think it's appropriate that children should be denied the opportunities they need.

**Mr Marchese:** And there's nothing you can do about that, really. You feel bad that they don't have a playground, but it's out of your hands, there's nothing you can do.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have provided this school board with resources. It's their decision. Much as I may disagree with a particular decision a school board has made, it is their responsibility, their obligation.

**Mr Marchese:** If the poor kiddies don't have a playground, my God, what can we do? It's hard, it's really hard for those kids, but what can we do?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** What would you suggest I say to a school board that has managed their resources in a different way so their children have not been denied playgrounds? What do you think their view would be if another board received special treatment?

**Mr Marchese:** The way to continue the injustice to the children is simply to remind the school boards that they've done wrong and they'd better fix it. That's what I hear you say.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are a number of efforts that are going on—

**Mr Marchese:** What are they?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —to make sure this school board is undertaking its obligations to try to provide these playgrounds. I think they should be encouraged and supported to do that. The communities are certainly doing that, to make sure those children do get what they need.

**Mr Marchese:** Will we continue the following day, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** We can do that. Before we adjourn, Mr Kennedy made reference to a document, and Mr Tascona and Mr Wettlaufer have requested that, if he so wished, he may present that to the committee.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of order for the record: I did provide the document at the meeting. I guess Mr Tascona wasn't here, because I raised that information before and it was circulated.

**Mr Tascona:** You didn't identify the document.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Let's not get into a debate about this any more.

We stand adjourned until Tuesday.

*The committee adjourned at 1800.*



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First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 10 October 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 10 octobre 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Education

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Éducation



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 10 October 2000

Mardi 10 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1603 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Steve Peters):** Welcome, Minister, members. We'll call the meeting to order. Right now, it is with the NDP. Mr Marchese, you have 15 minutes from now.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Minister, it was really cold in this room, I've got to tell you.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** Between the three of us, I think we'll heat it up.

**Mr Marchese:** We'll warm it up. Yes, that's good. It takes a bit of time, though. It's so hard in a cold room just to heat up.

Let me pursue the idea of the playgrounds again. You must have thought about it a little bit after I'd asked you that question about playgrounds. I'm worried and parents are worried. They don't know quite what to do, and many of them are tired of fundraising. They are tired of fundraising because they've had to do more of that in the last four or five years than ever before, we argue to make up for your cuts, but you argue who knows what. That's what they've been doing, and some of the parents are saying, "We're sick and tired of doing that. We don't want to do it because we have other things that we should be doing, and governments ought to be there to responsibly look after those particular problems such as the playgrounds." Many parents really are not looking to blame, and even if they want to blame someone, at the end of the day they are saying, "We still have a problem on our hands. We don't have the playgrounds that our children deserve and ought to have."

If the board isn't able or isn't finding the money for those playgrounds, those kids are without playgrounds. Then I, as a politician, come to you and say, "Are you concerned about that and are you willing to do anything to fix this particular problem?" I'm looking to you to find a way to mediate or to be helpful in fixing this problem, and I want to know what you're doing about that, por favor.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I'm extremely concerned about what happened in Toronto. School board trustees have a very significant responsibility. A lot of responsibilities and decisions, quite rightly, are on their plate. One hopes that in all circumstances they will exercise as

much care and judgment as you or I in our provincial role, or as our federal colleagues would in their role.

Sometimes, and in this case obviously, there have been some decisions made that are creating problems for the community. We have provided additional monies to this school board in a number of different capacities. I find it extremely difficult. We're either going to say that we have school board trustees who are elected to make decisions and to be accountable for those decisions or we don't. What is of concern to me is that, on the one hand, some on your side of the House and some in other sectors say we are not allowing trustees to exercise their authority, and yet on the other hand, when they make a decision, which some parents agree with and some parents don't agree with, it's, "Oh, well, now we have to come and overrule them. Now we have to come and fix it."

It's certainly a difficult position for everyone, but I don't think it's appropriate for us to come in and provide, as I said earlier, special treatment for this board where other school boards are managing issues in varying degrees. As you know, one of the things we said we would lay out in our student-focused funding was that there would be equitable monies, clear criteria and accountability for all boards that would be transparent. I can't now walk in and cherry-pick: "Oh, well, we like this board; therefore we'll give them extra," or, "This trustee made a dumb decision; therefore we'll move in and give them extra." We have provided this board with flexibility.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, I hear you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The boards are coming forward this fall with their recommendations for funding for the next school year. We're looking at that. I can't prejudge whether that might be of assistance, but they do know very clearly the process for funding for their accommodation and equipment.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, thank you. I think you've answered it. Frankly, my worry—I know you don't want to intervene on the basis that they have a responsibility and ought to be accountable for the decisions they have made. They are elected people, so they should do whatever is right on the basis of what you give them and on the basis of what they're elected to do.

They made a decision about the playgrounds, and what we now have are schoolyards without playgrounds. What I hear you saying is, "We can't intervene. Certainly



you don't want us to intervene, on the basis that you don't want us to intrude on their powers." In the meantime, those kids are without playgrounds, and, "It's sad. What can we do?" So kids don't have a playground, and it's too bad.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think the school board and the community are taking steps to try and remedy the situation. It's unfortunate to see, if I can believe media accounts, that at the same time the community is expressing concerns about this, there were still schools where equipment was being torn down. The board said they found \$3 million in a surplus. That was news to the ministry, which has been hearing a very different kind of message from the school board for quite some time, and the word "surplus" certainly wasn't in it. But there are steps they are trying to take to remedy this situation.

One of the other things school boards said to us is that they want predictable, stable funding, clear criteria, transparent rules, that it happens on a regular basis so they know that and can plan. We had done that. To come back and now all of a sudden say, "We're going to do"—I understand the frustration that is there.

1610

**Mr Marchese:** This is the frustration: boards are saying they have less money than ever before. You claim differently. I'm not going to get into the debate you had with Mr Kennedy about that, because I think it's a very elusive discussion, certainly very murky to get into, because we make one claim, you make the other. That's why I said to you that ultimately I have faith in the electorate to know the level of funding they're getting or not. Rather than debating that—they're saying they don't have the money. Yes, they did find \$3 million, they argue, and they're \$9 million short. If we're lucky, maybe next year they'll find more money. Maybe they'll have less money. In the meantime, they'll be without playgrounds. That's all I wanted you to remember—and those watching, all I want them to remember—that the kids are without playgrounds.

My argument is, somebody has made a decision. You're all interconnected with those decisions. You're saying at your level, "They made it." Maybe next year, who knows? Hopefully the board and communities are talking about it to solve it. Your answer is, "Well, we give them the money." God bless. In spite of what you say, I hear boards have gotten millions and millions less. By the time this support from the government ends in a couple of years, it'll be, in my view, a disaster.

So I don't have much confidence in the arguments you make. You took the financial power of boards to be able to have the flexibility that they required. I think it was foolhardy. It's contrary to your own ideological Conservative inclinations, yours and the party's, in terms of less government and more power to the lower levels. In this particular instance, as it relates to the board, you effectively took all the power away from the boards, to the extent that they have no more flexibility any longer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** With all due respect, they made this decision. There's no issue here of flexibility or anything

like this. This was their judgment call. As I said, some parents agree and some parents don't. As you and I and all of us in elected office understand, that's not a unique circumstance. They made that judgment.

**Mr Marchese:** I heard you answer. I agree. They made that judgment, and now the kids are going to be punished. You will not be a help toward resolving it is the argument I'm making. I'm also making another argument now in terms of accountability, and that is that they don't have any fiscal powers any longer, other than being accountable to you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Do you think it's any fairer for them? In the old regime, if they had done this, the way they would have gotten themselves out of it would be to go out and raise the property tax on, for example, a senior citizen living on a fixed income on a property down the street. Is that fair to her or him in terms of that circumstance? There is no wonderful never-never land where everything was solved.

As you know, I've been involved in political things for many years, not as an elected official, and I've asked this question. I've never yet heard of a school board that said, "Thank you very much, we have enough money." That has always been a pressure in the system.

**Mr Marchese:** There is pressure in the system. The scenario you paint is interesting because under the old system trustees would have had the flexibility and the power to correct a wrong if a wrong was made.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** They have flexibility now to correct things.

**Mr Marchese:** No, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Otherwise they never would have found this money from this surplus they seem to have.

**Mr Marchese:** But, Minister, I'm arguing with you that you have taken financial powers away. There is no flexibility left, is what I'm saying, other than finding dollars from one pocket to possibly put into another, which means somebody else will be hurt in order to deal with a—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, what pocket would you like them to pick? There is no pot that is no one's pocket. There is always somebody's pocket.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, for the sake of the argument—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are people out there, the taxpayers, who fund that in every school board. That's the pocket.

**Mr Marchese:** I hear you. You were worried about the seniors, weren't you, you just said a moment ago?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, I used that as one example.

**Mr Marchese:** But it's a good example.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think someone who's perhaps on a disability pension may well be another one.

**Mr Marchese:** Perfect example. You're quite right.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are many people who are paying property taxes out there and one of the things our government said, based on many reports and recommendations, much feedback from many people out there who paid property tax, from municipal councillors, who

wrestled with their municipal budget to make sure the property tax increase was minimal—

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, I hear you.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —overall and they watched school boards who didn't have that kind of discipline in some communities.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, let's get into the subject as quickly as we possibly can.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** You have one minute to get into it.

**Mr Marchese:** I beg your pardon?

**The Vice-Chair:** You have one minute to do all of that.

**Mr Marchese:** You're kidding.

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes. No, I'm not kidding.

**Mr Marchese:** Are we in the wrong—

**The Vice-Chair:** I'd love to give you half an hour more, but you've got a minute.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Welcome back, Mr Chair.

**Mr Marchese:** We couldn't have spent that much time chatting here.

**The Vice-Chair:** Your discourse was very interesting. You've got 30 seconds now.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Mr Curling. Madam Minister, no problem. We need more time. We'll come back to it. We have another turn. Thank you, Mr Chair. Welcome back.

**The Vice-Chair:** Well, thank you very much.

**Mr Gilchrist?** The member has 20 minutes. It'll make my job much easier if when I cut people off they could stop too.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** I won't be taking anywhere near the full 20 minutes, Mr Chair. I'd like to follow up just as a preamble to the question that I did have for the minister on some of the things Mr Marchese was asking you, because I find it quite incredible that he, just in his addressing the question to you, is prepared to gloss over this \$5-million to \$8-million surplus they've discovered. Astounding. That's 200 teachers we're talking about, Mr Marchese, and yet all year we've heard nothing from this board except how shy they are when it comes to resources, how desperate times are, how any cut had to be blamed exclusively on our level of government.

The other thing I'd reflect on is that even here in Toronto I don't recall reading any news reports about the Catholic board savaging their playgrounds. Surely their staff are just as adroit at looking at the publications that come from the CSA. Surely the staff at 70 other school boards all across Ontario care just as much about the safety of their kids. But if you were following the aftermath to this fateful board decision, you may recall reading a number of trustees saying, "I simply followed the chair. I didn't even read the report." They didn't read the report, and if they had read the report the TDSB staff member who drafted it said that the rules were not to be applied retroactively. There is no playground that should have been destroyed on the basis of these new rules. He pointedly said this is for new construction.

I understand the minister's frustration in trying to answer your question. Every one of us is elected with certain specific responsibilities. The only thing that changed with the TDSB is they lost the power to tax. They have all the same powers to spend. I for one am utterly shocked that you would so blithely disregard \$8 million in surplus and accept, on the flip side, all of these cries of poverty that have come from a board with a chair who was doing nothing more, I am convinced, than making sure she had lots of headlines in the preamble to her bid for higher office. We'll see if her replacement is as keen to deal with a number of issues that had nothing to do with school boards, but I, for one, think that is not a particularly good issue to find as an example of provincial inappropriate spending—far from it.

My first question to you though, Minister, following up on that: can you tell me what the timing is for the transfer of the bulk of the money to the school boards? We know that the TDSB got \$38 million last year. Could you hazard an idea of whether that number will change appreciably this year for the fund that they have to deal with the servicing of capital needs?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, as you quite rightly point out, that's just one piece of the \$2 billion—if I'm correct; someone here will correct me—that actually the Toronto public board gets for total funding.

We're in the process this fall of doing the work with boards that will drive the decisions for funding for the next school year. One of the improvements that I was able to make last year, and I certainly hope we can do it again this year, is that we do all of that this fall so that we can do our budget process and whatever that, as you know, we go through in the provincial level of government so I can come out next spring—we were out the first week of March last year and I hope I can be out in a similar kind of time frame this coming year. So that work is being done.

1620

Boards said they wanted a rational, predictable, transparent, regular process of funding instead of the kind of grant process they had before, which actually created more problems than it was trying to solve. We're doing that work this fall, and one of the issues we're looking at has to do with accommodation, school capital. Those are issues that we've asked boards for significant information on so that we can say, "Do we need to make changes in how we fund this for school boards so that it works better for them?" We can point to things that are working extremely well in the accommodation area, but we also know there are boards that have challenges that we may not necessarily be dealing with the way we should. So that work is happening this fall. If we are able to meet the timelines, I hope we're going to have early decisions out of the door next spring.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I'm encouraged to hear that to some extent we will now be seeing from boards like the TDSB their list of priorities up front so we won't see these sort of ex post facto problems that we've encountered with the playground issue. As an extension of that, I recall,



right at the very outset of our reforms, there was built into the legislation a requirement that the school boards would return to you every year an audited statement of how they had in fact spent the money.

I know some of our opposition colleagues continue to suggest that we aren't spending what we're spending. I've never heard any of them suggest the Provincial Auditor is inept or corrupt or a partisan Conservative, so hopefully these financial report cards will give us, once and for all, the definitive statement. I'd like your thoughts on when you expect we're going to see this sort of detail, and what you envision as the consequences if we find that, for example, 70 boards out of 72 are following the funding model and are delivering quality education. If there are only two deviating in spending, for example, too much on administration and not enough in the classroom—in other words, if they're violating the funding model, what will the consequences be to that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Good question, Mr Gilchrist. The first step is going to be what I would describe as a board financial profile, as opposed to the judgment, if you will, or the quality analysis of a report card. So it's sort of a board financial profile. I hope to have those out by the end of this year.

We're taking time because one of the things we want to make sure is that the boards agree that we're comparing apples to apples. We're taking a lot of time to do that work with the boards. So those will be out.

The second piece of this is to have the data so trustees, taxpayers, parents, and teachers can decide when they see—it might well be that a board decides to use money from this pot to address a priority in that other pot and that the community is very supportive of that, that is something locally elected trustees feel is important for their community. They will have the information to be able to judge that, and I think that's an important improvement.

The financial profiles, hopefully in the next couple of months. The report card piece of it, the sort of evaluative piece of it, would be something that would be coming further.

The other thing I should say is we haven't shied away from the use of auditors. For example, one of the things I think the Toronto school board is to be congratulated for is that they did—they have worked with the ministry and brought in a team of auditors, management consultants, to take a look at the money, where it was being spent, how they could manage it better. The Education Improvement Commission also was in to make some recommendations and some of the things the commission recommended that we do in terms of enhancing money that would benefit Toronto, we indeed did. For example, the learning opportunity grant, which deals with boards that have inner city needs for children, the Toronto school board benefits significantly from that funding. It was something EIC said we should increase, and we did indeed increase that.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Minister, I want to talk for a minute about the testing situation. I

know that basically every board across the province will be participating in the education quality and accountability testing for grades 3 and 6. Students are being assessed in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. I understand that this year we'll also be testing grade 9 math and grade 10 literacy, which will be administered for the first time.

I want to comment that last Friday I had three grade 10 students come to my office to do an interview on the very famous Bill 74. One of the students suggested to me that he couldn't understand why he had to be tested in grade 9. He felt that for some of the students who had a failing grade in that test, or somewhat less than it should be, their self-confidence would deteriorate and they would feel very down and many of them might quit and so on and so forth. I suggested to him, "When you leave school and go out and get a job, can you tell me the first thing that employer will probably do for you?" He didn't know. I said, "I'll tell you what he'll do for you. He'll do a test to find out whether you're qualified to get the job, and in your working career he'll test you many times to see how you progress." The concern I have, after chatting with this young fellow, is that there are those in the system who are suggesting they don't need to be tested, because they are confident that what they're learning and being taught is exactly what we need out in the real world. I do have concerns.

Can you tell us basically why the government has chosen to initiate these province-wide standardized tests?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The reason we told the voters, both in 1995 and again in 1999, that standardized testing would be part of our education quality reforms is that if you don't do the testing, you don't know how well the system is working. You may recently have seen a number of media stories expressing concerns about students' literacy skills. There have been national studies looking at how well students are reading and writing. There have been other media reports about concerns that little boys in the earlier grades are not doing as well as they should be. They're not coming out as well as little girls, and perhaps that's going to set them up for failure later.

None of those stories would have existed and none of those parents or the educators and teachers who are working so hard to fix it would have known if standardized testing wasn't going on. So it's an important commitment and an important part of our reforms. That is how you ask the question, "Are we doing the job we should be doing?" If we're not, then we have the information to fix that. That's why those tests are so important. The Education Quality and Accountability Office is the arm's-length, independent organization that is responsible for the testing policy: putting it in place, making sure the process is valid and that we have data that actually means something.

The other thing I think is important to recognize about the testing is that this kind of testing is not done to assess how an individual student is doing. That information is certainly available to that student, that teacher and that parent, so they can use it. But that is not the only way



that student is evaluated. There are many other ways a teacher evaluates a student, as there should be. So while the data is available for the student, what is of interest to school boards, principals, the teaching team, parents in general and the government is what those tests are saying about the whole system. For example, we've heard the concerns about how, because it is a more rigorous curriculum—it was designed to be a more rigorous curriculum—we need to take further steps for remediation to help students deal with the new curriculum. The marks in some areas in boards and schools have shown that. So we are indeed taking those steps, and I think we need to take more and are prepared to do that.

The other thing I think is one of the concerns you hear from some critics of testing is that this is going to do something to that young person's self-esteem. I can't think of anything more devastating to anyone's self-esteem than to walk out of high school with that little piece of paper that says it means something, and to walk into your first university course or your first job and discover it's a hoax, that it doesn't mean something. At that stage in their lives, it is very difficult to fix the problem. We need to be fixing that problem before they walk out the door, so that piece of paper does mean something. The grade 10 literacy test that is happening starting tomorrow is another step that will ensure our students are getting what they need when they walk out the door.

1630

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** In the Blueprint, we made a commitment to enhance the parental role in the education system and the role of school councils. I've met with several parents' groups in my riding that represent Wilton Grove public school. In some cases, parents' groups feel they have not been brought into enough decision-making around a particular school. In the spring, I also followed the debate in some high schools where parent councils voted for uniforms, and I thought this was a long time coming, three or four years, that they've had that progress to make decisions on whether there should be uniforms at that school.

Minister, can you explain how the parent councils are working across the province and if there seems to be any benefit as a result of that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The school councils, wherein parents have an opportunity to participate, and clearly participate, in what's happening in their school, are something we have not only instituted and made mandatory from school to school—every school—but are also in the process of actually enshrining that in law. The regulations that will clearly lay out the advisory role of school councils, the guidelines to follow, will be very important in making sure the parents' voice is heard in the decisions around the school.

The role that council plays is important. For example, we were just talking to Mr Stewart about testing results. One of the things we require is that if a school's testing results are very poor, that school put in place a turnaround plan, a school improvement plan: "How are we going to do better? How are we going to help our

students do better?" One of the significant roles of the parent council or school council is to participate in the development of that school improvement plan.

Also, the code of conduct, setting policies for safer schools: the province has legislation, the Safe Schools Act, which sets penalties for serious infractions—bringing drugs, alcohol or weapons to school. But there are many other policies that school boards or schools wish to have in place and, again, the school council's feedback is a very important piece in that.

The dress code, the uniforms: as you say, parents will have the authority to make the decision whether they want to have a dress code or a uniform in their school. That's another important role for them.

The selection process for principals and vice-principals: one of the important leadership roles in a school, one of the roles that makes a school a good school is the principal and vice-principal and how good a job they do. So selection criteria are something school councils need to be part of.

The regulations clearly spell that out. They also clearly say when school boards and principals must consult, and they must report back to those councils the result of that consultation.

The other steps we're taking answer the concern that many school council members had about needing more information so they could judge for themselves and so they could do a good job of providing input. We've done that, first of all, by providing much more information, using all the communication tools we have to communicate with school councils. I think it's important for the minister or the ministry or the government to actually be reporting to school councils, because we believe in accountability at all levels. I think we need to be reporting directly to school councils on the status of change and reform in the system, and that's an improvement I'd like to see.

We're also organizing regional forums for school councils, and developing resources so they can do their work. TVOntario, for example, has a wonderful communications hub, a Web site that has the 4,800 school councils able to communicate with each other, something they really wanted to do.

We're also restructuring the Ontario Parent Council which, as you know, is an advisory body that gives the government and the minister advice from parents. We want to make sure there's regional representation, so that those school councils have a way to communicate more directly with the government through regional representation on the Ontario Parent Council. That will also be a way to make sure the parents' voice is heard in the policy decisions broadly, province-wide, board-wide and school by school.

**Mr Mazzilli:** If we can go back to testing for a moment—I brought this up the other day.

**The Vice-Chair:** You only have about a minute.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Just a minute?

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** How much more time do you want?

**Mr Mazzilli:** I will try to be like Mr Marchese. I will defer my question to Mr—

**Interjection:** No, keep going.

**Mr Mazzilli:** OK, in a minute then. With the American election—again what they do is obviously for prosperity and economic growth, and obviously bipartisan. They totally support the idea of testing their children, to ensure they have the proper tools to contribute to their economy, and testing teachers. I wonder why there's such opposition to these things in Ontario. Do you believe the testing of teachers and students will produce a better-educated or more educated workforce—

**Mr Marchese:** Yes or no.

**Mr Mazzilli:** —to contribute to our economic prosperity in the future?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, I see it as a non-partisan issue. Student testing and teacher testing—all those assessment processes—are going to enhance student achievement, and we're going to have a better education system because of it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Madam Minister, I want to check with you again. We've now been a couple of weeks in estimates and a number of things have been referred to. I'm wondering if you're bringing them forward today for all the committee members. Are we going to have any versions of funding reports that show the impact of inflation enrolment or any information your ministry has collected on extra-curricular activity?

There was some indication that you are always in touch with the schools and that you would be prepared to share that. The details of the advertising you said you might table with us, and the cost of the six out of eight—it was suggested that with some time that would be forthcoming. I'm just checking now: do we have that information in writing? Could it be distributed to the committee so we could make the best use of the time we have left with you in estimates?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I certainly asked for written material for many of the questions. It's my understanding that it will be tabled either late today or tomorrow.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Minister. It's certainly helpful if we can get them before the estimates are done.

I want to ask you: right about where we left off, I was hoping to get from you on the record whether you see a role for yourself in terms of morale of teachers around the province. It's widely reported, it's evident if you go into a school, a staff room, if you talk to students, if you talk to teachers, that a variety of factors, some of them at least attributed to your government, are making this a bad jurisdiction to teach in for a very large number of teachers. I'm just wondering, do you recognize this? Do you find them acceptable costs? Are there things you are now prepared to do to look at that issue? Has the morale of teachers, their willingness to belong, been looked at by your ministry?

I want to say, perhaps for the benefit of some of your caucus, that other jurisdictions, like California and

Florida, are now in feverish pursuit of teachers, because they haven't been able to sustain them. It's not just about how the teachers feel; it's about whether we have enough qualified teachers to teach kids. I'm just wondering, is there a plan on your part? Do you have some apprehension of this problem? Is there some acknowledgement that your government may be responsible for this and may, therefore, be in a position to do something about it?

**1640**

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There are two very important issues. There's morale, and the second issue is supply. They're not necessarily the same. There's no question they can be impacted, but they're not necessarily the same.

Just quickly on supply, like every other profession in the western world, we are seeing a potential shortage down the road with the teaching profession because of demographics. That is why we've already begun to expand spaces in teachers' colleges, because we're seeing that more people want to be teachers, which is a wonderful, positive thing for the profession. We've increased spaces by 6,000. When we're looking at the potential numbers down the road, we think that should be helpful in making sure we don't have shortages. Also, those 6,000 are directed toward some of the key areas; for example, language and technology.

In terms of the morale—

**Mr Kennedy:** I anticipated that break, and I want to ask you: on the supply side, on the number of teachers, could your ministry furnish us with up-to-date figures on the number of teachers teaching in Ontario? The table you gave us last time omitted those figures for the last three years. Could we know your ministry's understanding of the number of teachers, on a comparable basis, so we can look at the number of teachers who are actually teaching, particularly those in full-time equivalent positions? Again, because we have such large numbers of dollars that we're recommending to be spent here, it would be helpful to know, in as much detail as you may have access to, the number of teachers we have in Ontario, so we can gauge some of that.

I will come back to that question. I'd be happy to hear you on the teacher morale question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, we certainly can get some numbers to you about that.

On the morale issue, as an individual with leadership in the education sector, I see my role very much as being important to help teachers understand their role in the system, to make clear to teachers that it is a role that is important and that is valued. One of the things I do every public opportunity I have, whether it's in speeches or media interviews or in the Legislature, and I have found opportunities here, is talk about the excellent teachers that are out there, the hard work they do, the dedication you see in so many of them in doing things to help their students. I think that is a message I need to continue to say, and I will continue to say that.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to ask you a small thing about what you just said, because I know it's repeated often by some teachers. In fact, in a school that I visited, an



award-winning teacher who was one of the teachers of the year last year, by OISE and the Toronto Sun, picked it up. You often say "many of the teachers." For the sake of clarity, do you believe the vast majority of teachers are dedicated, hard-working contributors to a positive learning environment for students in Ontario?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Because you often seem to qualify—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I was at the Toronto Sun awards ceremony, where I got an opportunity to meet and talk to those teachers. I was at the TVOntario awards for excellence for teachers. I have written and communicated with those teachers, because I think it's important for them to hear that from the Minister of Education. I will continue to say and do that.

**Mr Kennedy:** As you know, Minister, at the OISE awards, a former Minister of Education—someone I understand you once were in the employ of—looked down his rather venerable glasses and said to you, "Don't do teacher testing."

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, that's not what he said.

**Mr Kennedy:** I understand you may have—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** He and I have had many discussions about this.

**Mr Kennedy:** I was in the room—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Do not distort his position, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to tell you that's one of a litany of things. I hear, and have to accept, your good faith in terms of what you intend to be the effect of your praise and encouragement, and some words I understood to be around the definition of role for teachers. But do you understand it's not working? Do you understand there's a level of problem out there with teacher morale that has an impact, right now, on the classroom, on their ability to cope, and that some of the measures you've put in place may have something to do with that? Do you recognize there is a problem, and do you recognize a connection to some of the measures your government has made in the recent past?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The reason we have such a problem is because everything this government does or says is interpreted by our critics of various kinds to be an attack on teachers. Standardized testing is not an attack on teachers. A more rigorous curriculum is not an attack on teachers. Teacher testing is not an attack on teachers. Setting an instructional time standard is not an attack on teachers. But they constantly hear that from some individuals. And when that is the constant refrain they hear, it's not surprising to think that many teachers have some difficulties holding their heads up.

**Mr Kennedy:** Don't you think that's a 35,000 foot answer? Isn't that something that looks, from your vaunted position at Queen's Park—you're looking out on the land and you want to believe somebody's telling the teachers the wrong goods.

I know you go to a lot of schools. I don't know how much time you get to have one-to-one opportunities with teachers; I assume it's reasonable. But I can tell you, in my somewhat parallel experience, that teachers are think-

ing for themselves. They are finding that the measures you are taking undermine their ability to provide excellent education. It's not about something they take personally; it's not about something they imagine. You are putting a workload on them; you are putting a new curriculum on them. You have taken away preparation days. You have taken away some of the flexibility they used to have. You have, yes, brought in a new curriculum but not given them sufficient resources, and you have been part of a government that has attacked teachers. In fact, we saw some of the members opposite playing that kind of game today. Minister, do those factors—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, when have I—

**Mr Kennedy:** Are there any factors—I want to make it clear.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, this is important. When have I ever said or done anything that would attack the hard-working teachers who are out there, the teachers who are doing what kids need? I find that highly objectionable.

**Mr Kennedy:** Here is your opportunity, Minister. Is there anything your government has done that you would understand as having had that effect, undermining the morale of teachers, and are you prepared to change any of those things—there's a list of those things—to help build a more positive morale for the teachers of this province? Is there anything at all? You gave me a list of what wasn't. Is there anything there is?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, are you interested in my answering the question or not?

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, I am.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I said last year that one of the first priorities the teachers' federations said we needed to fix was special-needs funding and the special-needs program. I stood up publicly and said, "I hear you, and that's what we will do." I can go through, again, all the steps we did. I heard from teachers' federations that one of the things we needed to do was have more remediation for students who were struggling with the new curriculum. We are indeed doing that. I heard from teachers' federations—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm sorry, you're not answering my question. I wonder if there is a problem here.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I heard many concerns from the federations in the regular meetings I have with federation leaders and with individual teachers and I am quite prepared to continue to take steps to deal with concerns they have. We've slowed down curriculum implementation. We've put more money out to help teachers on new curriculum. We doubled the size of the summer institutes this year. There's been a list of issues they've given me and I am working my way through that list. You can say it's not fast enough, I understand that, but do not say that we are not hearing those concerns.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I've given you ample opportunity to answer fairly simple questions. Maybe, by implication, there's something in your latest response. But I would ask you to be blunt and clear: are there things—for example, do you understand that the staffing



model you adopted is undermining teacher morale? Do you accept that may be one of the consequences, unintended or not? I'm not imputing your motives, Minister. Do you understand that is how it is affecting teachers in Ontario today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** But we don't set a staffing model.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, six out of eight in your Bill 74?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not a staffing model.

**Mr Kennedy:** Let's talk about six out of eight, then. If you want to quibble, Minister, I would appreciate a direct answer to a direct question.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm trying to give you a direct answer.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, could you give me a minute, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's not working well, Minister, and I was trying to help you.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, give me a minute, please. I just want to hear one person speaking at a time. Mr Kennedy, if you want the minister to answer, let me know that too, or if you just want to ask the questions, because sometimes I get a response from the minister and then I'm hearing two voices at the same time. May we proceed now and just hear one voice at a time? Otherwise I may have to ask you to direct all your questions and answers or your statements or comments to the Chair.

You may proceed.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

I'm not sure, Minister, and I'll leave it up to you in your next response, if there's something specific that you acknowledge in your role in undermining morale. I think it makes it hard for you to be the agent of fixing things if you don't recognize the basic list, not of complaints but of real difficulty that teachers find with your agenda. A large number of teachers would like to reconcile that. But unless you're prepared, in this public forum, on the record to say what those things are, I think it's very disheartening to teachers to know that somehow you're avoiding the things they seem to find central to their inability to do their work.

I'd like to ask you specifically again about the funding.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Obviously you didn't want an answer to that, but that's OK.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've tried a number of times, and if there's something direct, I'd be happy to hear from you. Is there a direct answer to that?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, I didn't talk about complaints; I talked about issues and problems the federations identified that we have been moving to fix. So I don't think it is fair for you to somehow say that we are ignoring problems.

**Mr Kennedy:** I asked you a direct question, Minister: six out of eight. I asked that question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm not setting a staffing model. It is up to the local union and the board, because some have semester systems and some don't.

**Mr Kennedy:** Right. But you know what I mean. Why play games?

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Through me, please.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Just a second. Mr Chair, we do not set how the teacher's day is allocated. We set a board-wide average for instructional time in the classroom based on the national average. How that gets interpreted is something between the union and the board in terms of how they can do that. It's their responsibility to implement that within that framework.

**1650**

**Mr Kennedy:** If I may, there's not a lot of synchronicity with what you've just said and what's happening in the real world. But again, I guess that's the point of this line of questioning.

I want to ask you about the funding because I think it is fairly fundamental. You talk about having concerns for what's happening out there. When the member opposite tried to talk about a surplus in the Toronto board, I guess that meant by implication he was approving of the \$1,345 cut you've effected to students in Scarborough, in fact that you approve the \$662-per-student cut to the boards in Durham when enrolment and inflation are factored in. In other words, that by itself is a productivity aspect you're asking of teachers that you don't even acknowledge. I assume, when they table them, that we'll substantially agree with those figures, but in the absence of them I'll ask you to accept them.

I just wonder, again—I asked this once before but I think maybe there's a better prospect in this conversation: if it comes down to funds being needed to help bring peace to the schools out there, to help the students receive their extracurricular activities, to help get at some of the chaos of some of the new staffing model, however derived from your Bill 74, that has come about in many of the boards, is it possible that you will add funding to the funds that are already available to boards in schools this year? This is on behalf of parents. Parents have asked me to ask you this question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the things the honourable member seems to like to ignore is that based on the consultation meetings I had last fall that identified a series of problems with funding, we did indeed put in significantly more monies to address those. We heard concerns about class size, we heard concerns about fewer teachers, we heard concerns about special needs, we heard concerns about pay raises and we heard concerns about remediation. All those things have been dealt with through policy, regulation or legislation and more money. But I categorically reject, while resources are very important, the honourable member saying that the only thing that predicts how well a teacher does in the classroom is how many bucks are around. I value a teacher's contribution more than that because a good teacher teaching is more important for the quality of education than the bucks the accountants like to kick around.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, if you were able to sit there and agree, claim credit for your government and say, "I cut \$918 per student and I don't think it's affecting

students," at least then I think there could be some respect conferred on your office. But instead you dodge around it. You try to say you gave money back. You've given nothing back compared to what you took away.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We didn't give money back. We gave new money, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, with your funding formula, you took money away.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. That's not fair. That's not accurate. We can have this debate again, if you want it.

**Mr Kennedy:** You cut money from boards.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** On a point of order, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. We're getting those two voices again. Mr Kennedy, direct your statements to me, then.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm always happy to engage you in—

**The Vice-Chair:** First, it makes me feel very important, as I'm presiding. Next, it will bring some order to the whole thing.

**Mr Tascona:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I'm getting very tired of Mr Kennedy in his line of questioning. At least Mr Marchese has respect for the minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Tascona:** The point of order is this: I have a right to hear an answer when a question is being put out. I cannot hear any responses by the minister because Mr Kennedy is interrupting.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Tascona:** It is a point of order. I have a right to hear the question answered.

**The Vice-Chair:** If the answer is not to your satisfaction, I can't help you.

**Mr Tascona:** I can't hear the answer.

**The Vice-Chair:** The answers are there. May we proceed?

**Mr Tascona:** I can't hear the answer.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's not a point of order.

**Mr Tascona:** What are we here for if I can't hear the answer?

**The Vice-Chair:** You may not have the right answer. May we proceed?

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to proceed to one area around funding to garner the minister's true intention. I raised in the House the other day this document, which basically summarizes the results of the review that the government undertakes of every single application for special needs: ISA, funding 2 and 3. What it shows, Minister, is a very large discrepancy headed for the school boards. When we look at the rules that you circulate to the boards, you've told them in your so-called legislative grants for this year that their special-needs funding is going to be determined by this review. That review comes up with amounts varying board by board, but it's \$174 million less than what you've come up with this year. So, Minister, I have two questions for you.

**The Vice-Chair:** She has to respond within a minute.

**Mr Kennedy:** They're very succinct answers, I hope. Will you scrap your review model that is wasting so much time out there? The principals have already identified some 20% of the time, which would be \$60 million to \$80 million worth of teachers' time, that should be spent on the most vulnerable kids. Will you scrap it, given the huge discrepancy between what you think you're prepared to fund and what the review comes up with as the allocated dollars? Second, will you guarantee here today to these boards that they will receive the same money they received this year for next year; this review model, whatever it is and however it came up with these results, and the huge amount of energy and effort spent and perhaps wasted. Will you guarantee that they will be the same as this year? So those two questions, Minister: will you scrap the review and will you guarantee the funding?

**The Vice-Chair:** Madam Minister, I think you should take those under consideration and when it comes back around you can respond.

**Mr Marchese:** Madam Minister, just to go back to some of the questions I raised earlier about playgrounds and trustees making a mistake, I just have a couple of questions and then we'll move on to this other topic here.

My point is that if the trustees had the financial responsibilities and power, they would have been able to correct a wrong and/or a mistake that may have been made. As a result of your financial central control at Queen's Park, they can't remedy that because they don't have any powers to raise money. You were quite rightly concerned that if they were trying to correct a wrong, they would have to raise property taxes, and then what would happen to poor seniors if they can't afford it and what would happen to poor people with disabilities? Quite rightly I agree with that.

My question to you is, if you're worried about seniors and worried about people with disabilities, why haven't you removed completely the load of the property tax burden from those groups?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As you will recall, we had attempted to remove the entire cost of education from the property tax. The municipalities did not agree with the only way that could be done. So in the interests of the consultation we compromised on that based on the feedback we had from municipalities. Half of it comes off the property tax and half of it does not. We've also brought down property taxes in this province and we still have, if I recall our campaign commitment, another step or two to take in bringing property taxes down further.

**Mr Marchese:** If you remove the education portion completely, that would be a relief for property taxpayers, particularly those who have disabilities and seniors. But you haven't done that. What you've done is to essentially download other social responsibilities onto the municipalities, what you've called the zero sum gain, where you take out education but you download other responsibilities. So the same load remains on the property taxpayer. How does that help them again?



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, as I said, when we said we would look at local service realignment, there was no ability for the province to assume more than a \$5-billion liability on its own hook and at the same time keep the lid on provincial taxes. So what we did with the municipalities was to reallocate the responsibilities they have and we have and the funding responsibilities. They have had significant opportunities for savings. For example, municipalities have saved literally hundreds of millions of dollars across this province with the reduction in the welfare caseload.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. Thanks, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So we are very concerned about the impact on property taxpayers. That's why we've made the changes; that's why we've put in place reductions in property taxes, because we are concerned about any increase in taxes.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you. I'll make a statement and then move on to the other questions.

The fact of the matter is, you make the claim that you're worried about seniors and people with disabilities. The fact is, it's not backed up by any substance and/or law. The point is, as a statement—I don't want your reaction because I have other questions for you—you haven't helped people with disabilities; you haven't helped seniors. You're not really concerned about them because the load for them remains the same.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. We've brought down property taxes, Mr Marchese.

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**Mr Marchese:** The load remains the same. It may be that, because of Mel Lastman's claim not to raise property taxes, taxes have remained relatively stable for the last couple of years, except your changes have increased them somewhat. But in the next election you'll see property taxes going up, because the download isn't entirely even, the cities say, so they're going to be loaded with other responsibilities that will cost property owners more—seniors, people with disabilities, young people who are buying a home and so on. You can think of incorporating whatever you want to say into other questions I might have of you, but that's the reality. I wanted to put it out. I just wanted to hear how you would deal with the fact that you care so much about people with disabilities and seniors, and that would be the reason you've stripped the trustees of their responsibility to raise money.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There was another reason too.

**Mr Marchese:** I know.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That was because—

**Mr Marchese:** I didn't ask you a question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —it was two-tier education, Mr Marchese, which I know you don't support.

**Mr Marchese:** But I didn't ask the question yet, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** That's the problem when you start speaking that way and put your comments and thoughts to me.

**Mr Marchese:** I like to look at you when I need to—

**The Vice-Chair:** Maybe you like looking at me, but I am the Chair.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you. Do you see how it works? It's so simple. I'm with you, Chair.

So that's the point: we've taken away the responsibilities of trustees, they have no more power, they're powerless.

In terms of your compliance Bill 74—I don't want to get into that now—it used to be that you as minister had the power to appoint an investigator and enforce compliance as it relates to deficits boards might have had. So boards couldn't have a deficit, otherwise—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's the same authority you had when you were in power, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** No problem. You're quite right. Then you decided that wasn't good enough, and so you included other areas of compliance. So those poor trustees have no financial responsibility any more.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not accurate, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Hold on. Let me ask a question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You do them a disservice when you say that.

**Mr Marchese:** No. I was a trustee for eight years; I do them no disservice. But let me move on.

By the way, I was a full-time trustee. I quit as a teacher to do that full time. That's why we had more time to read documents. Now they have no time, because they're part time, very part time.

Compliance now includes not just deficits, but compliance on curriculum, co-instructional activities, class size, instructional time, trustee honorariums, expenses and violations of the funding formula.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** So you think it's OK for a school board to take special-needs money and spend it on something else, and we should sit back and say, "Sorry"? Do you think that's OK? Is that your policy?

**Mr Marchese:** No.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I don't agree with that.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm just wondering—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If you think it's OK for a school board to take money designed for smaller classes and spend it on something else when teachers and parents are saying, "We need more for smaller classes," I don't agree with that and I don't think parents do.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Chair, I thank her for those questions. I'm going to ask a few of my own now.

**The Vice-Chair:** Go right ahead.

**Mr Marchese:** It seems that sometimes you want them to be responsible, and sometimes you don't want them to be responsible; sometimes you want to make them accountable, and sometimes you don't. Now you're saying to me, "You think it's all right for them to have the flexibility to move around, and it's not. As a result, we had to centralize not just education financing but literally control of the entire educational system because we don't trust trustees."

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, that's not our policy.

**Mr Marchese:** Normally you say to me, in answer to other questions, "Don't we trust trustees?" Here you're



putting forth an argument that says, "Do you think it's OK for trustees to move money around?" I happen to think that, yes, trustees ought to have certain powers to be flexible, to make decisions according to what they think is correct for their communities, because they got elected. But now your compliance under Bill 74 says they will comply not just to issues of deficits, but to issues of all those other areas, which essentially includes everything.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Marchese, actually it does not. They still have considerable authority and responsibility, as they should. But in 1995, and again in 1999, we said we would set certain key province-wide standards for education quality in this province, and that is indeed what we have done. We set those standards province-wide because we believe they are important for enhancing student achievement. I'm sure you would agree that we need to ensure those commitments are kept.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. I asked a question, and I got an answer. It's the way it works. You ask questions and you get answers, and we might not like them. Right, Frank? You're right.

All I'm arguing, by raising that question, is that obviously you don't trust the trustees to make decisions, because in Bill 74 you make compliance a matter to cover all sorts of issues, which includes everything, and then you said, "No, that's not quite right."

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, Mr Marchese, one example of the very important issues is class size. We have some teachers and parents who say they don't think their school board is using the money they've been given for class size appropriately. Don't you think there should be an ability for a provincial government that hands out that cheque to know if it's being used appropriately and, if it's not, to be able, after due process, to take appropriate steps?

**Mr Marchese:** You're quite right. I don't disagree. But I'm just asking you a question as to what powers they have left, and your way to answer my question is not to answer but rather to ask me a question: "Don't you think class size is important?" Yes, it is.

I'm asking, do you think trustees ought to have certain flexible powers to make certain decisions, because they are elected? You say yes—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, I do, and they do.

**Mr Marchese:** And I'm telling you they have no more powers left, because under Bill 74 they're compliant to everything in terms of compliance.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** What powers do they have left?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, there are certain key quality indicators which we think are important to the sector. That's what we expect. Trustees make decisions about accommodation. They make long-term plans on accommodation. They make policies around safe schools. They make all the policies about curriculum implementation. There is a whole list of things that trustees have responsibility for.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Minister. I'll make a point and then move on to another question. You passed a whole heap of laws in the last four years, and in the coming years in your second term, and trustees are simply instruments of your policies and your will, because you've centralized everything. I don't need a response, because I've already got it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I don't agree with your comment.

**Mr Marchese:** Obviously. It's quite obvious from your answers that you don't agree. I just want to let the good public know, the ones who might be watching. The trustees are powerless now. They don't have any financial control now. You've passed laws to which they need to abide. In Bill 74—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, you and I as provincial members have laws from the federal government that we have to abide by, so there's no difference.

**Mr Marchese:** Hold on, I've got a question for you.

You're quite right, except I'm saying to the few people watching that trustees have no flexibility any longer and that they're almost puppets of your will because they don't have any decision-making power any more, and you're saying, for the benefit of the few watching, "Yes, they do." That's great. We're having this dialogue, and we're going to give the electorate watching us the ability to say, "We have two points of view here."

On the issue of extracurricular activities, I find it astonishing, because you said this to me the last time, and I find it interesting that you say this is not a staffing model to teach 6.67 courses. It's interesting how you could define that. It used to be that teachers were obliged to teach 1,250 minutes per week, and boards negotiated that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, they did.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, no, that's our standard, 1,250.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, you redefined instructional time to 6.67 eligible courses. You changed the definition.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Because we were asked to be clearer.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, of course. So it's staffing model, and they have to teach more than before. I don't know how you define that, but teachers in the field—I used to be one—and other teachers I know, including a brother who happens to be there, are telling me they're teaching the extra course. I don't know how you and your staff—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's interesting, because some say it's an extra course and some say it's half a course.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, is it or isn't it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It depends on the board and the union. We've said, and the legislation is very clear, that we're talking a board-wide average. Yes, the workload standard that was set two years ago is more classroom time than was set before; it works out to 20 to 25 minutes—there was no standard for instructional time in Ontario. So more classroom time is required because, as you know, we fund boards based on a whole range of standards. That's one of them. They have flexibility within that standard as to how they allocate staffing. It

doesn't mean every teacher has to do 6.67 or four hours and 10.

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Frankly, the other thing is that we heard the concern that the previous definition had meant, for some teachers, that they ended up doing seven out of eight. They said that was too much. So we modified significantly to try and make it easier for boards to implement. That meant more money, so more taxpayers' money went out to indeed do that.

**Mr Marchese:** It's fascinating to hear your answers. The answer from teachers is that they're teaching more, and parents know it. However you define it, I don't know, but they're teaching more as a result—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, but, Mr Marchese, the instructional time standard is 20 to 25 minutes more.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Mr Marchese, you're not really being helpful to me at all. If you direct your questions or comments to me it's much easier. I'd ask the minister too to direct her response to me. I'm getting these two voices and I'm not hearing anything. None of the people outside, who we are all trying to impress, are understanding it.

**Mr Marchese:** I agree with you. I'm just asking the questions, and when I ask questions I expect an answer. If not, I'm speaking, right?

**The Vice-Chair:** But also give some time, if you expect an answer, for comments.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm trying.

What I'm getting, Mr Chair, from the teachers I'm talking to is that they're teaching longer than ever before. They're all teaching longer, as a result of Bill 74. It's nothing magical. I think I heard the minister say at one of these meetings where she met with teachers, "Get on with the job," as if Bill 74 didn't affect them somehow.

She passed Bill 74. Teachers are affected by an extra load in addition to the clause that says, "If you don't do the extracurricular activities we're going to force you to do it." The trustees are now having to comply with all sorts of things that weren't there before. These are the three elements that, first of all, infuriated trustees, and secondly have upset a lot of teachers because the workload is a bit more than they can bear. So a lot of them are deciding to make a choice: to teach more and not do the extracurricular activities.

So we establish a connection between Bill 74 and the effect it has on teachers. I'm fascinated to hear your answer saying Bill 74 hasn't had that effect or ought not to have had that effect and teachers should just move on. Is that correct?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Marchese, the instructional time standard, 20 minutes' difference, was set two years ago, based on the national average. We made significant changes this year, in answer to the concern that it was difficult to implement. That included more money and a different—for example, we included, in the definition of "instructional time," remediation work, which many teachers were saying they were doing, and I have no reason to disbelieve them. We included the teacher ad-

viser program, which again was something teachers said they were doing.

No one is trying to duck the fact that that is an increase in high school. For some elementary teachers, the standard that was set has actually meant a decrease, depending on what their local agreement was.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you. Again, a statement, not a question, Mr Chair. The teachers and the unions that the minister speaks of, quite often derogatorily, used to have the flexibility to move around the various boards in a way that I thought was respectful of their situations. Now, through the new definition of the instructional time that teachers did not request, they have an extra load. That's what I want to say to the good public that's watching, through you.

You talk about teacher testing as a positive, as if somehow people asked for it. The reason teachers—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Your government did, actually. The Royal Commission on Learning, teacher recertification—your party supported it.

**Mr Marchese:** Sorry. The fact that we did the royal commission doesn't say we did it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You supported it.

**Mr Marchese:** The fact that the royal commission—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You said the initiative was needed. We agreed. We're implementing it.

**Mr Marchese:** That's nice of you to say that the NDP is all implicated, whether we like it or not, because we did the royal commission.

I'm interested in your comments about teacher testing, because you make it appear like "I don't know why anybody should be upset, except somebody's stirring that pot." Teachers certainly aren't upset, you're saying.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, that's not what I said.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh. What did you say?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I said there are critics who turn everything this government does—for example, teacher testing—into an attack on teachers. It is not an attack on teachers.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me tell you why it is.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, it's not. I understand they disagree.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me tell you why teachers think it is.

**The Vice-Chair:** If you do that, do it through me. Also, you have about a minute and a half.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, through you, the reason teachers are opposed to teacher testing and the reason they don't like what you're doing is because teacher testing hasn't worked anywhere in the world that I as a former teacher am aware of.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not accurate.

**Mr Marchese:** There was a thick study done that shows that teacher testing hasn't worked anywhere in the universe that I'm aware of. The reason teachers are upset at you is because they say, "If it hasn't worked anywhere and these people want to introduce something that hasn't worked, then it's an attack on teachers." You haven't



shown anything to me, or anyone, that says, "Yes, we have a testing model that works."

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You don't think there should be an internship for new teachers? You don't think there should be professional development for teachers?

**Mr Marchese:** Is that teacher testing? Is internship—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** You don't think there should be qualifying tests when a teacher leaves teachers' college?

**Mr Marchese:** She's asking the some questions? I'm saying to her that internship—

**The Vice-Chair:** That's what happens when you start speaking crossways like that.

**Mr Marchese:** But she asked me a question about internship. That's not teacher testing.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, it's part of our teacher testing program. We've announced it. We're working on implementing it.

**Mr Marchese:** But it's not testing a teacher; it is helping a teacher. Internship is a helpful thing. It isn't called teacher testing.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Now you're upset because our program is going to help teachers?

**Mr Marchese:** No. I'm angry at you, and let me tell you why. To teachers you say, "We're not doing teacher testing," and to the public you say, "Yes, we are," so you can have it both ways.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Marchese, I have said—

**Mr Marchese:** So when we're talking to teachers, we are saying—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I have said consistently—

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —that we are going to have a comprehensive teacher testing program to measure, assess and tabulate knowledge, skills and ability—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order, please.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —publicly, privately, and that's our understanding.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Thank you. Mr Marchese for 30 seconds.

**Mr Marchese:** That's the problem I have with all this. It is an attack on teachers, because it hasn't worked anywhere. The attack is on teachers, because to teachers you say, "We're not testing you," and to somebody else you're saying this, and to the parents you're saying, "Yes, we are testing, because they need to be tested." I'm saying it's pure politics, Minister. Obviously it's worked with some, but I'm happy to report it's not working with many of them.

**The Chair:** Mr Tascona.

**Mr Tascona:** Talking about pure politics, I think I just heard it across the way. Anything to assist teachers is considered an attack. I guess we can resolve that.

Minister, the opposition consistently makes improper allegations that the government has cut special education funding since it came to office. The member from Parkdale-High Park has thrown out several misleading numbers that are simply inaccurate. I know this government has been working to improve special education in this province. Could you please let us know the facts with

respect to special education funding and how you are working to improve special education across the province?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I said earlier, special-needs funding was one of the first priorities our education partners asked me to work on when I had a series of consultation meetings last fall. We have indeed been doing that, first of all on the resource issue, by increasing the funding province-wide by 12%—it's the third year in a row that that money has been increased—also by setting better program standards so that school boards know what the best practices are. They can share that. They can make sure all those programs, all the steps that are being taken, are meeting quality standards, quality programming that's required for special-needs students, and that parents know what to expect. We're in the first year of a three-year process, and I must say we've had significant input, which we are responding to, to make sure we all can do a much better job with our special needs students, both at the school board level and at the ministry level.

The other thing I should say is that when we were putting together the special-needs funding mechanism, we sought a lot of advice to do that. When we were looking at where we started dollar-wise, we went to school boards and said to them, "What are you spending on special-needs funding?" That's where we started, where the school boards said, "This is what we're spending on special needs—special education." We heard concerns that it wasn't enough, so we topped it up in the first year, we topped it up in the second year and we've topped it up again for the third year in a row, on top of what they originally said they were spending, at the same time as making sure that money is being allocated in a better fashion for all those students.

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**Mr Tascona:** I think you've answered the question that the government has not cut special education funding and is looking for greater accountability. Province-wide standards and additional funding for special education are key parts of the quality special education approach.

With respect to our new student-focussed funding formula and enhanced special education, can you comment on what the government is contemplating with respect to further enhancements?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Further?

**Mr Tascona:** Special education grant.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's the work we're doing this fall with our education partners. We heard two things. We heard they wanted a funding mechanism that was flexible, that allowed them to use monies as they saw fit within the special-needs envelope. At the same time we heard feedback that we needed a special process for high-needs students, which we indeed have. We heard, on one hand, that they wanted funding to reflect that need; in effect, to be flexible, to go up or down. If they had more students, they had more money; if they had fewer students, they had less money. But we also heard concerns about predictability and stability. That's why we have the guarantees in there, if you will, so they have



some predictability in terms of monies and how to plan for that.

If you'd like, we could have staff here go through what this means for some boards. We could walk you through last year and this year, in terms of the increases some boards have had, if you'd like.

**Mr Tascona:** That would be helpful.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** This is Norbert Hartmann, one of our assistant ministers, who can describe for you the information that's being tabled.

**The Acting Chair:** Could you state your name and your position when you start speaking?

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** I'm Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister, business and finance, for the Ministry of Education.

The information you have in front of you provides an overview of the funding that has been allocated to special education in the year 2000-01, and compares that allocation to the 1999-2000 allocation that was produced by the combination of SEPA grants and the ISA validation process.

If you turn to the bottom of the table, you will see that in 1999-2000, the ministry allocated roughly \$1.2 billion of funding to special education throughout the province. That varied by board, depending on enrolment. You can see that it ranged from a high of \$213 million for the Toronto board of education to a low of around \$472,000 for the smallest board in the province, based on enrolment and ISA.

In the year 2000-01, the total allocation was \$1.352 billion, again produced by a combination of the SEPPA grants and the ISA grants. As you see in the final column, we then report on the variance between the two figures in 1999-2000 and 2000-01. That shows an additional \$146,986,000 allocated to special education. It also shows that for every board in the province there was an increase in total special education funding between 1999 and 2000.

**Mr Tascona:** The document we're dealing with here is special education allocation. In the riding I represent, I notice the amount for the Simcoe County District School Board has increased by \$6 million-plus and for the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board it has increased by over \$2.2 million in terms of special education allocations between 1999-2000 and 2000-01. Is that correct?

**Mr Hartmann:** That's correct.

**Mr Tascona:** Is there anything else you want the deputy minister to expand on with respect to that document?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Tascona. I think that answers your question.

**Mr Tascona:** I certainly think it confirms that the member from Parkdale-High Park has his figures wrong and, in fact, that the government has been working to improve special education significantly. It reinforces my view on this matter and should lend comfort to my constituents and to parents across the province.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Mazzilli.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, my question is in relation to the infrastructure formula. Certainly that was not an issue in the 10 lost years of the Liberal and NDP governments, because there was no infrastructure improvement in Ontario. Since the Mike Harris government came to power, as you know, over 700,000 new jobs have been created and over 550,000 people are now not collecting welfare and have the dignity of having a job. In essence, what that's done is brought people back to Ontario with many young children, and many of those children are in portables. What are you and your ministry doing to correct that problem?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** If there's one area where funding changes have helped school boards in high-growth communities, it is certainly around the issue of portables and new school construction. The problem with the old way it was done was that need had to build up and then the school board had to apply for a grant for the whole school. They had to join the queue. Maybe they got it that year and maybe they didn't, depending on the will of the government of the day. It could be selective; it could be arbitrary. It was not a predictable or transparent process.

What we have done, by giving school boards financial incentives to do long-range planning and financial support to do that, is that they are looking down the road at what's happening in their communities and putting in place long-term plans for the expansion of schools and classrooms, and they don't need to wait until there's this pent-up demand. What we're starting to see, as this funding has taken effect in the last two years, is that we're starting to catch up on that incredible backlog. In some communities in my region, for example, we had more portables than classrooms in some schools, an absolutely unacceptable position. In the last two years, we have seen 1,250 fewer portables. That's about a 9% reduction in the number of portables. We've seen the construction of 214 new schools and 193 new school additions and expansions. I think we're probably going to see that pace pick up even more in high-growth communities. It's one of the biggest expansions of school construction we've seen in many years in this province. Frankly, for some communities it's long overdue, and the new funding helps make that possible.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Some people want to go back to the old way, where school boards have the authority to do direct taxation through mill rates. I brought out in estimates committee that in the Thames Valley District School Board, the superintendent in charge of their business operation said he would have had to ask for a double-digit rate increase to get essentially what they got directly from the ministry, and we've heard about the roles of school trustees and so on. In your view, wouldn't trustees now have time on their hands to dedicate to education issues as opposed to what rate they have to increase taxes by?

1730

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** There's no question that school board trustees now do not have to handle decisions around setting mill rates or increasing property taxes.

One of the reasons we changed the funding and took away the ability to raise property taxes, if I may phrase it like that—you can see it when you look at how Bill 160 actually ensures that can be done in a legal fashion. What it does is eliminate two-tier education. Frankly, one of the things I always find slightly ironic is that some of our critics like to accuse us of trying to have two-tier education. Yet it was our funding change that actually removed that, because it was a problem. If you were in a community that had a very rich tax base or a school board that was reckless in terms of their tax increases, there was lots of money to spend. If you were in a school board that did not have that tax base, there wasn't the money to spend. A student's education should not have to rely on the luck of where that student was born. So the formula is transparent, and it is equitable for all school boards and for students wherever they are in the province.

I think it has been a significant improvement and responds very much to the work and the recommendations. There were many reports done. Previous governments had examined this issue, and the recommendations were there. We said we would do it, and we indeed have done it. As long as I remain in this chair, I have said that every year I want to make it better. We made significant improvements this year. I'm hoping to make significant improvements next year, as we all get more information with boards and the ministry, and we find even better ways to support important quality education initiatives.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Has Dalton McGuinty been supportive of the present funding formula?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That would be an interesting question to ask him. Some days it is difficult to figure which side he would be on on this. But we've been very clear. We are doing what we said we would do. For example, the Education Improvement Commission examined this issue very carefully—they have done a number of board-by-board reviews and studies—and said that the policy that is driving the funding is indeed accurate and sound.

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** First of all I'll make a comment, for Mr Kennedy's interest. I can't remember if Mr Peters was there, but I know one of his representatives was. Minister, I'd like to inform you that the best thing that's ever happened to the Thames Valley school board was the funding formula, and that was stated by one of the directors at the board level at a meeting a couple of months ago.

I'd like to zero in on my own—I'll be somewhat selfish here; I do represent two boards. In the special education allocation you just circulated, I see that even though the Lambton Kent school board has a decreasing population—we closed six or seven schools in my riding last year, and I sympathize with some of the problems they have—they did receive \$1.2 million.

I'd like to quote from an article which appeared in a weekly newspaper. It's called the Spirit of Bothwell, and it's the Wednesday, September 20, edition. The title is "Why he's running for school board trustee." If I may quote a paragraph, this individual states, "By closing

seven schools, this board supposedly was to save \$1.7 million. They said they would be able to balance their budget by doing this. A couple of weeks ago, this board received some additional funding worth almost \$3 million. This amount was to be used to reduce classroom sizes, yet no schools were reopened. This amount was just swallowed up."

Minister, we keep hearing this throughout the province. I don't think there's a board across the province that received less money with regard to special education this year as opposed to last year. But we keep hearing that there's no money for special education, there's no money for this.

When the ministry allocates money for special projects, and if the board does not spend that money in those projects, what measure do you take to make sure that money is spent properly to educate the kids, to answer the needs that they may need or the special needs that they may need?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's a very good question, Mr Beaubien. It's something that both trustees and parents and teachers continually ask for more information to judge how the money's being spent, where the money is being spent. So we are asking boards to do reports to make sure that they are reporting and that the reporting is accurate. There certainly are mechanisms within Bill 74 that if a board were to not use the money appropriately, one, we have the ability to find that found out. Parents, for example, would have an ability to ask for a review of that. We have the ability to find that out, and in the extreme circumstance we would have the ability to issue an order to a board for that to be remedied. We do have that authority now. It's something we didn't have before.

**Mr Beaubien:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got about 30 seconds, Mr Gilchrist.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I wouldn't presume on the minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** With you I know it's very difficult, but let's try.

**Mr Gilchrist:** —to approach something in that brief time, so I'll pass it back to you, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Gilchrist. Such co-operation. I like this. Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair, and in that spirit of co-operation, I just want to make a comment for the record. One of the members opposite, I believe, talking about Thames Valley, gave an unnamed testimonial. I don't see why that testimonial would be jumping for joy at a cut of \$651 per student, but obviously Mr Beaubien finds that acceptable and even desirable. Also, Mr Beaubien obviously is not perhaps looking at the interests of Lambton Kent, which has lost \$790 per student, but that again perhaps is acceptable to the member opposite. I don't want to infer any motive, but we heard the testimonial and I thought it might be useful to see.

I'd like to ask the staff to circulate for the committee's benefit the rest of the table that was just circulated. The table that was just circulated speaks to special education



increases last year to this year. It does not speak to, again, the question that we've put on the table, which is the review. How much money would they get if the government actually followed its own policy? About \$174 million less, so I'll return to that question, but I want to make sure everyone has that. And again, Minister, I challenge you—I don't think it's a challenge; I think it's a request that's been made before—to put on the table, so this group of your colleagues and ourselves can see it, how much money was being spent on special education before you took it over, because the boards keep saying they were spending more. You've had many opportunities to do that.

But I wonder if you could come to the two questions I closed out with, because I want to ask you again very clearly: we have a situation where your review comes up with figures for boards. For example, in the instance of Thames Valley, let's say, it would approve \$16.7 million in intensive support grants versus the \$22 million they got this year. This may be acceptable to Mr Beaubien, but I wonder from your standpoint, Minister, will you guarantee that the people of Thames Valley, the people of London and area, will receive the same money they are getting this year, and secondly, will you scrap this review that is taking so much time away from the kids you purport to be helping with this whole special education arrangement?

So if I could ask the first question first, will you guarantee the same amount of funding next year? This is causing a lot of concern out there in the community.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, Mr Kennedy, do you or do you not agree that funding for education should be based on enrolment?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, your own formula is based part on enrolment and part on the intensive support amounts that you are putting forward.

I'm asking you a question, Minister. It's a fair question, and I would ask that you answer it in the spirit in which it's intended. Will you, for the purposes of the parents and the students and the teachers out there involved with these special-needs kids, guarantee they get the same money for next year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Why would I guarantee a board that needs more money that they're not going to get more money? Why would I issue a guarantee like that? You either believe in enrolment—

**Mr Kennedy:** Because, Minister, your review—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, he asked me a question. I'm prepared to answer, but there he goes again.

1740

**Mr Kennedy:** I asked the question. I'm looking for the answer, Mr Chair, because it's fair to ask for the answer.

**The Vice-Chair:** Here we go again. If you'll direct your questions to me, then, and the response to me, it may be a little bit more orderly. And I'm asking the government side, please let them get their interaction in, you know; it's estimates time. Sometimes I will allow a little

interchange because sometimes it's much more refreshing and enlightening.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm sorry. Mr Chair, to you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, if I could answer?

**Mr Kennedy:** The minister was asked a question and has declined to answer it. If that's the case, if the minister can't tell us whether she will guarantee the funding next year to these boards as a minimum—I didn't say this is all she can give them; as a minimum. Is she prepared to make that commitment today? I think it would bring a lot of relief to the parents, to the students themselves and the teachers—

**The Vice-Chair:** I think she heard the question. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair.

First of all, the reason we are spending the time with school boards now is to inform the decisions for future funding needs. If the honourable member is asking us to make a guess, to just sort of pick a number out of the air, I'm sure we could do that, but I don't think that's an appropriate way to fund special-needs education in this province. When we have done the work with our school board partners, when we have the information, we will make an intelligent and informed decision about funding that is required for next year, as we did this past year.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, with respect—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The second thing he asked, Mr Chair, was whether we would scrap the ISA funding formula. I would like to inform the honourable member through you, Mr Chair, that in all of the meetings I have had with school board representatives, with teacher representatives, with the representatives of the special-needs community, not one of them has said, "Scrap the ISA funding formula."

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, he's interrupting me again. What they have said is that there need to be improvements. We've made improvements this year, we're making improvements next year and over the next two years, but I specifically asked that question: do you want to scrap this and start again? They have all said no.

The third point: he likes to claim that somehow or other we are not living up to what the funding formula says, that we're not following our own policy. He says that because he is deliberately distorting what is being done. Claims are submitted to the ministry. Those claims are judged based on criteria. They are assessed. That is the policy; that is the process. Some of those claims are approved and some of them are not. That is the approved policy, but that does not mean that that individual student does not get educational services, because the school boards know that they are to provide educational services for those students. That's why we have what is called the SEPPA money, which again has increased, so that they have the flexibility to meet the needs of all their students.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I'm sorry. The minister declined to give the guarantee to those students and also apparently approves of a formula that is out by at least



32% this year, that is a source of huge consternation and takes at least \$60 to \$80 million worth of teaching time out of the classroom.

I want to move on, Mr Chair—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Again, Mr Chair, that's not accurate.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to ask a question directly, Minister. I want to bring you down from 35,000 feet, from skirting around issues, and I want to ask you directly what you're going to do for these students here. Students are here from Rockland school. They met with you earlier. They have no extracurricular activities. They're telling you that their teachers are tasked, that they have too much on their plate, that they're not able to get that level of extracurricular activities in their schools. Their school year has been compromised, Minister. There are three students from that school sitting behind you. You know who they are; you met with them earlier.

Minister, I want to know, what are you prepared to do to ensure that they have the full benefit of their educational year? What responsibility are you prepared to take, or are you simply prepared to take out the hammer and cause chaos in the school system?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, are you suggesting we proclaim Bill 74?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm asking you. You're the minister. What are you prepared to do for these kids in terms of the school year? I've asked you already. I've made several suggestions. Are you prepared to be flexible? You've said no. Are you—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Kennedy. We have been—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to raise my question, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Mr Kennedy, and then the minister's response.

**Mr Kennedy:** Madam Minister, I have made proposals to you before. I have said, will you be flexible? Will you allow—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have been.

**Mr Kennedy:** Will you allow them—Minister, it will behoove you to answer the question, I'm sure.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've tried.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I've asked you to be flexible; you've said you will not be. You've said you passed Bill 74—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, I just said we have been, Mr Kennedy—

**Mr Kennedy:** Secondly, Mr Minister, I asked, having extracted—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —to the tune of significant millions of dollars.

**The Vice-Chair:** Madam Minister, let him complete. If he wants to take his 20 minutes to do that, that's his prerogative. Let him complete.

**Mr Kennedy:** In their particular board, the Upper Canada board, you have extracted from them, from these kids—nowhere else—\$836. That's what you say they're worth less than the kids who were being educated five years ago.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Those are your figures, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** We've asked for your figures, Minister, and in three weeks you have yet to produce them, so we'll take these figures for now. That's an 11% reduction.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not accurate, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's an 11% reduction. Yet you're saying in these proceedings that you're not prepared to put money in. You won't even say how much money it would take to return this school and that board to the situation they had last year, where they successfully had extracurricular, before you passed Bill 74.

Through you, Mr Chair, I put to the minister, not in an indirect question but very specifically, what is the minister prepared to do for these students from Rockland school to make sure they have restored to them the school year they deserve?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, what we have said to our education partners: we made significant investments this year in priorities that teachers said were important. For example, concerns were expressed about job loss. We put in \$263 million for smaller classes to make sure we were minimizing any potential job loss, more money for remediation, more money for all kinds of things.

We moderated significantly the workload standard so it would respond to the concerns teachers put forward. In addition, we did not proclaim the section of Bill 74 which said a principal could assign, because teachers said they didn't think that was appropriate.

Thirdly, I had said for many, many months before the introduction of Bill 74 that using extracurricular activities every time there was a fight with a board or with a provincial government—because this is not a new problem; this didn't get invented under a Mike Harris government. These issues have been before other governments as well. I said that using extracurricular was not acceptable. Parents said, "No. Stop it."

I said that if it was not stopped, the government would have to take steps. It was not stopped. The government introduced legislation. A great kerfuffle: the legislation was going to make it mandatory; teachers did not agree. I said OK, and we did not proclaim that section of the legislation. One teacher apparently said to one of the students I met with earlier today, "I want to do extracurricular and I've got time to do extracurricular, but I won't do it if I'm forced." While the legislation is not forcing that teacher to do extracurricular, that teacher is not doing extracurricular.

There are thousands of teachers across this province who care about the kids and do it because they see it as part of the job. Thousands of schools are doing this. We have other schools where teachers are choosing to work to rule. It is catching the students in a way that is unfair to them. It should not be happening to them. We have said we respect the collective agreement process. In communities where those agreements are being reached, we're starting to see a resumption of extracurricular activities. But if it does not resume, we are prepared to take further steps, as we should, to make sure students are not unduly or unfairly penalized because a local

union has a fight with a school board or with the provincial government. It is not fair to the students.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I see where you have neglected to take any responsibility for the current state of affairs in Rockland school, where you have said over and over again that you are basically blaming teachers for having made the choice. You're not recognizing that your staffing formula has created a situation where they can't provide the same kind of thing, and where you've created a climate of fear on the part of some people. In the schools I was in, people who are contributing teaching extra classes at noon hour are afraid to do so because they think you're going to make it mandatory.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, you talk about a climate of fear.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, I want to rephrase the question—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have teachers out there—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order, order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —who are being threatened by union leadership in some communities. That's the climate of fear, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** I allowed you to respond to Mr Kennedy, and I'd like you to give him the same courtesy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Mr Chair. All the noise in the world isn't going to change the fact that the minister has yet to put on the table one constructive measure to help these kids or any other kids have a normal school year.

Minister, either you have your head in the sand or you don't recognize what the principals have told you and what a number of separate school boards have told you: that they are unable to provide the same level. You say "thousands and thousands." You haven't put one single piece of paper here, handwritten or otherwise, to show us the status of extracurricular. So you're guessing, Minister. I think that's shameful. But more shameful is that you can't—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, Mr Kennedy. We are providing you with information that school boards provided to us.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order, order.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, as you know, we tabled information at this committee that shows that 94% of school were disrupted.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** And I told you that figure dealt with public high school. It did not deal with Catholic and it did not deal with elementary. If we're going to use figures, I would caution you to use accurate ones.

1750

**The Vice-Chair:** Madam Minister, could I have some order, please. Mr Kennedy has the floor. I don't need interruption over here. I think I can handle it all right. There's only one Chairperson here, and that's me. I don't want you all to be chairing it. Mr Kennedy's got the floor.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** You may not like what he says. Let him continue. Then the minister, if she has time, may comment.

**Mr Kennedy:** The minister has made reference to several steps she's prepared to take. I would think, Minister, to show some respect for the students here today, that you would outline for us, explicitly, in ways that everybody will understand, what your intent is, what your conditions are, for what you are prepared to do. If you're prepared to take out your 80-pound hammer and cause chaos in the schools by forcing extracurricular, I think you owe it to us to tell us today that that's your preferred option.

Minister, you've mentioned several steps, so my question is, Mr Chair, can the minister tell us specifically what the several steps are that she's prepared to take on behalf of these students to make sure they get their school year?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, we have asked those students, as I did in this meeting—I'm meeting with other student trustees; we have been communicating with boards. We are looking at the options we have available to us—we have many—to restore extracurricular activities in those schools where it is a problem.

Again, I think it's important for the honourable member to recognize, since he deliberately chooses not to, that there are many, many schools—all he has to do is pick up a local newspaper, and see where they're covering school sports, for example, in many communities. So we do know that there are thousands of teachers out there who do provide it because they see it as part of the job. In those schools where collective agreements are not resolving this issue, then we are looking and we will take appropriate steps.

The feedback I've received from students today and from the discussions we continue to have with school boards and parents and students—and I'll be meeting with student trustees again—will inform the decisions we take.

I don't think it's appropriate, given the fact that in some of those communities they are doing collective agreements—I'm assuming the honourable member thinks we should let that process occur, unless he's advocating that somehow or other we should disrupt it. I think that local solution is the best one, if it's available. If it's not, we'll deal with that.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you're prepared to let local school boards and, I guess, federations choose their poison but are not willing to give them something more palatable to chew on to take all of this tension away. None of this was happening in the school last year.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, that's not correct.

**Mr Kennedy:** You've brought it on.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not correct, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** If you're not prepared to share with us, I guess that's the message the students have to bring back to their school board, that you don't think it important enough to tell us at this committee what it is you're prepared to do.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what I said, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, this is a rural school—

*Interjections.*



**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Here we go again. Mr Kennedy has the floor.

**Mr Kennedy:** I met with the board of the Upper Canada school board, and the board tells me that one of the things they suffer from, and it may be a factor in their, up to now, inability to reach their contractual conclusion, is the way you treat rural schools. For example, in ridings of some of the members opposite—I think Mr Beaubien and I have spoken on this—they receive in the order of \$10 per student, on average.

**Mr Beaubien:** You refuse to debate it publicly. And by the way—

**Mr Kennedy:** Any day, any time.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Mr Kennedy:** If Mr Beaubien would like to debate this in public, I'm glad he's finally surfacing on the issue. Let me just outline the issue that we can debate.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Order.

**Mr Kennedy:** Ten dollars per student in his riding. And yet, over in the Premier's riding and the Treasurer's riding—just coincidentally, I'm sure; near-north boards and so on—they're receiving something in the order of \$400 per student.

My question to you, Minister, is that you have a designation for rural schools, section 30 of the legislative grants here. In it you basically exclude most of what most people would believe are rural schools in this province. You don't provide the funds to the majority of rural schools, for example, in southern Ontario, in Mr Beaubien's riding and in many ridings across the province.

I invited Mr Beaubien—I think he's going to express agreement when his turn comes—that we should rectify this. This should be fair. This funding model doesn't have regard and respect for the fact that certain schools in rural areas are under certain disadvantages. That should be reflected accurately in the formulas.

I'm wondering—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Beaubien:** On a point of order, Mr Chair.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I have an answer for the honourable member. I'd like to share it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. A point of order? Make it quick.

**Mr Beaubien:** Mr Kennedy has just made a statement with regard to requesting that he meet with me. Mr

Kennedy, on two occasions, refused to debate publicly with me.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Beaubien:** I want this on the record, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** You may want it on the record, but it's not a point of order. You and he can discuss it quietly outside.

Mr Kennedy, you've got about a minute to wrap up.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you. I'm sure Mr Beaubien and I can clear that up very quickly.

Minister, I'm sure you can anticipate the question, and I understand you have an answer. I'd like to know, are you flexible on this point? Will you reconsider the funding formula for rural schools? Will you make it fairer to include more of the rural schools that find themselves disadvantaged, some of whom find themselves having their doors shut prematurely, as boards in places like Avon Maitland and Lambton Kent tell me, were they able to fairly access the rural funding, which exists in the funding formula but is out of their reach? Minister, are you flexible enough and are you willing to change the rural funding formula? Last fall you said you might look at it. Can you tell us now whether you are looking at it and whether it will change?

**The Vice-Chair:** The disadvantage you have, Madam Minister, is there's about half a minute to respond.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would like to know where Mr Kennedy has been for the last year. I said we would look at it. We were doing the work to change it, and that's exactly the work we are doing.

First of all, there are literally millions and millions in money that a rural board gets. There are criteria for what a rural board should be. They were clearly established in consultation with the boards. We recognize there needs to be further work on it. We are continuing to work with the boards to see if it needs to be adjusted for the next funding year. I have stated that publicly on more occasions than I could count, and it's wonderful to see that the honourable member has finally listened.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much. Your time is up, Mr Kennedy.

Madam Minister, just for the record, there's about an hour and a half left.

This committee stands adjourned until tomorrow after routine proceedings.

*The committee adjourned at 1757.*







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# Journal des débats (Hansard)

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 11 October 2000

Mercredi 11 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1546 in room 228.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We'll recommence consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Education.

At this time we'll just do some housekeeping. We've got about an hour and 32 minutes left. We ended off yesterday with the Liberals, and we will start with the Conservatives.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Do I look like a Conservative?

**The Vice-Chair:** You're so far right, you're left.

We will start with the NDP. Twenty minutes to the NDP, 20 minutes to the government side and 20 minutes to the Liberals. That will leave us with approximately 32 minutes.

I want to ask if you approve that we have 10 minutes each to wrap up afterwards and then have the vote. Could I have consideration of that? Any consensus?

**Mr Bisson:** No. Rotation.

**The Vice-Chair:** You want rotation? Rotation it'll be.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** If I could speak to that, it would disadvantage our party. In the last estimates we did, we split the remaining time equally among all parties. I hope that's not a petty consideration. I think we should be willing to make sure everyone ends up with the same time.

**Interjection:** Speak to Mr Bisson.

**Mr Bisson:** I might just allow that to happen, depending on the answers I get from the minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** I'll take that up later on, then. Mr Bisson, you've got 20 minutes.

**Mr Bisson:** Welcome to the estimates committee, Minister. It's always a pleasure to have you with us. There are a couple of things I want to bring to your attention in regard to what is happening, or not happening in some cases, with education in my part of the province, in northern Ontario. In no particular order, maybe we'll just get started. If you'll put the translation on—this is in relation to francophone issues.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education):** Certainly.

**Mr. Bisson :** Vous savez qu'un des effets de la formule de financement que vous avez mise en place c'est que, dans les communautés comme Raymore, Iroquois Falls,

Val Gagné et d'autres communautés comme Opatatika, les petites écoles qui ne sont pas pleines à capacité, selon votre formule de financement, sont en danger de fermer l'année prochaine.

Dans les conseils public et séparé francophones de notre région, les conseils ont fait des manoeuvres pour pouvoir garder les écoles dans ces communautés. Mais, comme vous le savez, puis je sais que vous avez ce dossier à coeur, quand on reste dans une communauté de 600 ou 700 personnes, on a l'école à laquelle on peut envoyer nos jeunes et on trouve, parce que la population de la communauté rétrécit, qu'il est très difficile de remplir ces écoles.

Dans la situation d'Opatatika, on trouve une école où peut-être 60 % de l'espace est rempli par les élèves. À cause de ça et de la nouvelle formule de financement qui exige que les écoles sont remplies à surcapacité, ces écoles sont en danger de fermer.

Je veux savoir, de la part des étudiants, des enseignants et enseignantes et du village d'Opatatika, comme Val Gagné et d'autres communautés à travers la province, quel plan vous avez en place pour nous assurer qu'on ne va pas fermer ces écoles, qu'on va permettre à ces jeunes-là, au moins ceux dans les premières années, de continuer leur éducation dans leur propre village, et qu'on ne va pas les mettre dans des autobus pour les envoyer 60 ou 70 kilomètres sur les chemins hivernalux du nord de l'Ontario pour aller à l'école ailleurs.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Merci, monsieur Bisson. The rural communities, you're quite right, are a very important priority. One of the reasons we are doing the work with school boards right now is to take a look at some of those issues. We've asked school boards to submit to us their long-range capital plans and some of the challenges they see in terms of meeting those. There's no question that to have effective programming, you need a certain number of students in order to provide that. On the other hand, there are communities where, because of vast distances, it's very difficult to provide students with that schooling.

We're looking at those issues right now to see if we can better support boards in making decisions about accommodation. They are very difficult, and for a smaller community in a remote area they are extremely important.

**M. Bisson:** Mais je pense que vous allez accepter qu'à la fin de la journée, c'est une question de financement. Soit on a une politique dans la province qui dit que notre



gouvernement provincial, qui est responsable pour l'éducation, est engagé à s'assurer que les communautés comme Opasatika ont le droit de garder une école dans leur communauté, ou on a une politique qui dit qu'on ne va pas prendre cette responsabilité.

Moi, je sais sur quel bord je tombe sur la question. Je comprends. Ça veut dire, que oui, on va avoir des écoles qui vont être moins pleines, et quand on regarde le coût par étudiant de l'école, il va être beaucoup plus élevé. On sait ça. Ma question est, si à la fin de la journée vous vous rendez compte, comme moi, que ça va être une question de plus de dollars, votre gouvernement est-il prêt à adopter une position qui dit, « Oui. On reconnaît que dans ces communautés il y a un fait bien différent des communautés comme Timmins ou Kapuskasing. Comme province, on est préparé, au moins, à financer ces écoles-là dans ces villages pour les plus jeunes dans notre système d'éducation » ?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, the way we fund school boards recognizes, right out of the gate, that the costs are higher in northern communities and in rural boards with big geographic areas. There is a bias, if I may use that phrase, built into how we fund, to give those boards additional monies on many different factors because of those vast differences.

Our first priority is to make sure all children are getting the education they need. We recognize that in northern communities that may well cost more. I can't prejudge what changes, if any, will be made for the next round of funding, but I can say we know that we need to make some changes in funding for northern and rural boards. We realize there are a series of issues we may need to change to support boards better. That's one of them. I don't want to prejudge what those consultations will do, but I acknowledge it's an issue that needs to be dealt with. I'm sure that over the next couple of months you will be hearing, either from us or from the board, where we end up on that.

**M. Bisson :** C'est un peu encourageant, madame la Ministre, je le dis encore, que vous êtes en train d'accepter un peu le point de vue de ces communautés qu'il est important qu'on garde ces écoles.

Je veux que vous compreniez très clairement qu'il y a une réalisation dans ces communautés qu'on ne peut pas avoir, possiblement, un système qui va donner de la prématernelle au 12<sup>e</sup> ou 13<sup>e</sup> année pour les prochaines couples d'années. On ne le fait pas présentement, et personne ne demande qu'on donne une éducation jusqu'au 12<sup>e</sup> année dans ces communautés-là où elle n'existe pas. Ce dont on veut s'assurer, au moins, c'est que dans les communautés comme Opasatika, là où on a les plus jeunes dans notre système qui vont à l'école présentement, on va leur permettre de continuer leur éducation dans leur communauté.

Quand ils sont un peu plus vieux, c'est moins inquiétant pour les parents que ces enfants embarquent sur un autobus et partent sur les chemins à travers notre province, mais je veux m'assurer qu'on va essayer de protéger au moins les plus jeunes dans notre système

d'éducation, qu'on accepte qu'ils restent dans leur communauté pour faire l'éducation primaire jusqu'à une année qui fait du bon sens pour eux.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Actually, I agree there is a difference between elementary and secondary, and is a factor that, if it's not part of our deliberations, should be. Thank you for raising it.

**M. Bisson :** J'ai une autre question qui a été soulevée par les profs du niveau de la 10<sup>e</sup> année. Vous savez qu'il y a le nouveau curriculum. On y a fait des affaires intéressantes et justement je suis d'accord avec certaines parties de ce curriculum. Mais il y a une partie qui m'inquiète un peu comme législateur. Vous savez, j' imagine, comme députée provinciale, qu'on est invité, comme le sont tous les membres de l'Assemblée, d'aller présenter aux 10<sup>es</sup> années et aux années précédentes, dans leur programme d'histoire, ce qu'on fait ici à l'Assemblée législative. Jusqu'aux dernières années les profs d'histoire de la 10<sup>e</sup> ont toujours fait le programme de citoyenneté et c'était mandataire quand ils prenaient ce programme. On me dit que dans le nouveau curriculum ils ont enlevé le programme de citoyenneté hors des classes d'histoire et ils l'ont mis dans un programme à lui-même, séparé, et c'est un programme d'un demi-crédit. J'ai un problème avec cet aspect-là parce que j'ai vu cette année que, parce que ce n'est pas un programme mandataire, on a beaucoup de jeunes qui n'optent pas pour ce programme.

J'aimerais que vous me clarifiiez quelle est la position du gouvernement : est-ce que, premièrement, ça doit être mandataire ? La deuxièmement partie va dépendre de votre réponse.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm going to ask Maurice Proulx, our assistant deputy minister, to deal with that issue for you.

**Mr Maurice Proulx:** Good afternoon. Maurice Proulx, ADM, French-language education and educational operations.

**M. Bisson :** Excusez-moi, monsieur. Parlez-vous français ?

**M. Proulx :** Excusez. Oui, s'il vous plaît.

**M. Bisson :** On a le droit de parler français ici.

**M. Proulx :** D'accord. Anciennement on avait le cours d'histoire et de civisme, comme vous l'avez indiqué, réparti en deux. Mais la partie qui est consacrée au civisme n'a pas été réduite par rapport aux années précédentes. Alors c'est sans doute la raison pour laquelle de la part des enseignants d'histoire on n'a pas eu de réactions, parce qu'on n'a pas diminué le temps qui est consacré à l'enseignement du fonctionnement du gouvernement ou du civisme.

**M. Bisson :** Je veux comprendre quelque chose, parce que je suis justement en train de me préparer cet automne pour aller parler aux 10<sup>es</sup> années. On me dit qu'ils ont enlevé ce programme et qu'ils en ont fait un programme séparé. Est-ce que c'est un fait ?

**M. Proulx :** Oui. C'est enseigné en deux sections, mais la durée du programme de civisme n'est pas diminuée par rapport à ce qu'elle était auparavant.

**M. Bisson :** Mais c'est un programme séparé de l'histoire et un programme d'un demi-crédit.

**M. Proulx :** Oui, mais il faut comprendre qu'auparavant, l'ancien cours de civisme était Civisme et le Canada au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. C'était un cours d'un crédit sur l'année mais il y avait toute la partie Histoire du Canada au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle qui comportait ce crédit-là.

**M. Bisson :** Oui. Je suis très au courant. La question que je pose c'est, est-ce que la politique du gouvernement est d'assurer que ce programme est mandataire ?

**M. Proulx :** Effectivement, oui.

**M. Bisson :** OK. Il semble y avoir certaines écoles qui ne comprennent pas cette situation. Je vous préviendrais que ce serait une bonne idée que vous clarifiiez ce point avec les commissions parce que les jeunes auxquels j'ai parlé au 10<sup>e</sup> année dans une couple d'écoles secondaires dans mon comté ont dit qu'ils optent de ne pas prendre ce programme. Ça me fait quelque chose parce que, comme politicien, je comprends qu'il est important que nos citoyens comprennent le système politique pour pouvoir faire des choix informés.

**M. Proulx :** D'accord. On va certainement apporter les précisions nécessaires.

**Mr Bisson :** Minister, I just—

**Hon Mrs Ecker :** I was just going to say that if you could give us some specifics on that, we will follow up, because I agree with you.

**Mr Bisson :** The other point, on the question of citizenship classes—should we have taken it out of history and put it as a stand-alone program?—is for another debate. But on the program itself, it really bothers me, and I think a lot of members here probably have the same experience as I do. You get asked to go into a school to speak about what legislators do and explain a bit the roles of provincial, federal and municipal governments, and school boards as well. I think we've got to do some rethinking about how we do that, because there's really a large lack of understanding on the part of young people as they come through our school system. I don't want them to understand the political process and how the rules work in the assembly; that's not what we're trying to do. But I would hope we could get kids coming out of our school system who understand that Canada is governed by a Prime Minister, not a President; that we are not a republic but provinces.

When I go into some classes, some of the comments I get from kids really amaze me. They get a wrong impression about our system of government by watching American-dominated television and don't understand that we do have a very different system of government here. I think we really need to do a much better job, not only as legislators but also at the ministry, in trying to convey to students how the political process works, so that when they come out and become voters, often while they're in grade 12, they're able to make better decisions about who to vote for, and hopefully get involved themselves in the political process.

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**Hon Mrs Ecker :** Actually, Mr Bisson, you make a point that is certainly very near and dear to my heart. This is a democracy and we should be training our young people to be literate consumers of that democracy and participants in that democracy. One of the changes in the curriculum is to focus much more not on Robert's Rules of Order but the whole process.

As you were speaking, one of the things I may go back and talk to my staff about is—I know a number of us get invited to come in, especially in part of the grade 5 class. We may actually want to do a specific course profile, if you will, for MPPs.

**Mr Bisson :** For members. That was my next point.

**Hon Mrs Ecker :** That would be an excellent suggestion and I think we'll take a look at it. We all get invited into classes. I think it's a good thing for us and the kids. I find their questions to be wonderful. They sometimes ask the toughest questions. So that would be a good suggestion.

**Mr Bisson :** The part that always amazes me is that they say to us, "Why is it, sir, that when we watch the parliamentary channel, you politicians are all acting like a bunch of kids?" until I organize them into a question period, and then there's a real to and fro and I say, "Hey, what did you guys say at the beginning of this?"

I just want to come back to this real quick, just to make the one point. The suggestion I was going to make is that it would be really good if the ministry were to put together some sort of kit that members—or teachers, if members are not able to attend—could utilize to better explain how the Legislature works. It should include, in my view, some sort of video presentation—we certainly have the capacity here with our parliamentary channel to provide the feed and some of the expertise necessary—and secondly, to really have some information that we can give students, so they take it away and say, "Now I understand how our government works, the different levels, what the power of cabinet is, the power of the Prime Minister." It would just make it that much easier. If you want to make any comments on that, that's—

**Hon Mrs Ecker :** Good suggestion.

**Mr Bisson :** This affects both French and English schools, but I'll try to do the best I can. You know that last week I asked you if you would be willing to meet with a group of students out of the Timmins area who were quite concerned, as students here are, about what's happening in the extracurricular activities. Our students at Timmins High and Vocational School, l'école secondaire Thériault, O'Gorman High School and Roland Michener High School all participated in a student protest, I guess we can call it—I wouldn't want to call it a strike because that wouldn't be very nice—protesting the actions of your government when it came to the decision to force teachers into what they do already. I don't want to get into the politics at this point because I'm looking for your help. I asked you at the time if you would be prepared to meet with those students and I'm



wondering if you would publicly put on the record that you are prepared to do so.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've encouraged the students in a number of communities. I understand their frustration. As the Minister of Education, it's a little difficult for me to condone walking out of class, but I have encouraged them to meet with their student trustees and I am prepared to meet with the student trustees. I don't know if it will be one meeting or several meetings or whatever, but I'm certainly prepared to do that. I've met with and talked to students on a number of occasions just in the last little while and I look forward to doing that.

**Mr Bisson:** There's something I don't understand in this debate. Let's get into the politics of this, because we are practitioners of that honourable profession. I understand it's one of the oldest professions existing. From a political point of view, as a government, why would you actually decide to pass that legislation and do what you did when it came to trying to force teachers into what they already volunteered for? I'm trying to get above the politics here. We know and you know that 99% of teachers are doing this stuff not because they are paid, not because they are told to do it but because they want to. It seems to me, and I think it seems to a lot of reasonable people out there, that you were looking for a fight. I'm wondering if you can explain to me and to others why you would want to get into this fight in the first place when it's not necessary.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate the concern that parents and students have around this issue because extra-curricular, co-instructional activities, everything from parent-teacher night to commencement exercises to Remembrance Day ceremonies to coaching the soccer team, all of those activities are extremely important to students and they very much add to the educational experience. There is no question that all students did not do them, that all teachers did not participate. But there is a sizable proportion of the student body and the teacher body who did do it. Teachers did it because they saw it as part of their job, they enjoyed doing it, and they knew it benefited students.

Unfortunately, what we have seen over the past couple of years is that whenever there is a dispute between a local union, for example, and a school board, or an overall provincial union and the government or whatever, one of the things that frequently suffered was a withdrawal or a partial withdrawal or a threat, "If the board does this or if the government does that, we won't be able to do extracurricular activities."

As you know, Durham region is the worst but not the only community that has experienced this difficulty. I have met teachers across the province who have had serious repercussions from colleagues and union representatives when they did try, during various disputes of one kind or another, to keep extracurricular activities going. I had said for many months after I became minister that parents and students had said, "Enough," that this was not an acceptable thing whenever anybody had a fight, to not do it. I said very clearly that if it con-

tinued, the government would have to take action. I was very clear about that.

**Mr Bisson:** Pardon me, Minister, it's a little bit—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Bisson, you've got a couple of seconds left.

**Mr Bisson:** Very quickly, it's like going after a fly with not a flyswatter but a shovel. It's not the huge—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We didn't legislate that every teacher had to do extracurricular. We didn't legislate that teachers had to be on call seven days a week or anything like that. We put in place—

**The Vice-Chair:** I think that's the time, Minister.

**Mr Bisson:** You're very good as a timekeeper.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I know. He's quite aggressive on that.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** Minister, I just want to cover an area involving education funding. During this estimates committee there have been several numbers rambled off by the opposition that are simply inaccurate. In particular, there have been improper allegations by the opposition that you have cut education funding. This government has demonstrated time and again our commitment to publicly funded education. In my own riding, I have seen some positive changes to education since this government has come into office.

I think it would help the committee if you could dispel the myths and give us the real picture regarding education funding in this province.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We certainly have tabled some information. As I said, we'll be tabling other information during the course of estimates.

Mr Kennedy has made a number of allegations about dollars. Unfortunately, the analysis he, or whoever has provided it for him, has done makes a number of incorrect assumptions or assertions. For example, you can't say that the decrease in the proportion of property tax to education is a cut in education; it isn't, because that decrease in property tax going into education has been more than made up for, dollar for dollar, by increases in education, general provincial revenues, grants.

There is the issue of the social contract, for example, that a previous government before ours had brought in as a way to try and find savings within the system. Boards did find savings. Many of them did it through different efficiencies or other targets. It depended on how they did that. Mr Kennedy is suggesting, as I understand what he said, that because we haven't reimbursed them for the savings they had, that somehow or other that's another cut. So that's not accurate either.

As I said at the beginning of these hearings, as I've said many times, overall funding for education in Ontario has increased. It was about \$12.9 billion in 1995, or a little under \$12.9 billion. It is now \$13.5 billion. Again, Mr Kennedy on the one hand has said that we haven't factored in enrolment, but we have. The whole formula is based on enrolment growth. For example, since 1995, growth in funding is running well ahead of enrolment growth: a 5.4% funding increase versus a 3.2% increase



in enrolment. This clearly was something that we committed to voters we would do. We are shifting more of that dollar that is in education into the classroom. We have been very clear about that and the need to do that because when we looked at education spending in the past, or you talked to people in the system, there was a great increase in administration spending. There was not an equivalent increase within the classroom. There's at least \$700 million more actual in classroom funding when you compare to 1997, when the system changed.

**1610**

The other area where we have increased is in special-needs funding by 12%; that's just one year. That's the third year in a row we've increased special-needs money. Per pupil spending also was at the highest level since 1995. We have several charts that we will table with the committee that highlight some of those numbers, and I can let staff table those with the clerk and deliver them to the members.

We have been very clear in the commitments that we made to the voters, both in 1995 and in 1999, vis-à-vis education funding, and we will continue to be true to those things that we said we would do.

**Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans):** Minister, back in our ridings when we have consultations and discussions with our constituents, one of the overriding concerns of parents and students is that at the end of their education they are prepared to successfully compete in the global economy. Certainly it's my view and our government's view that the very significance of the public education system is to prepare our students for a world they have to meet when they graduate from high school.

One of the challenges or one of the concerns we hear constantly is the commitment to literacy. When you go into workplaces and talk to a lot of employers and businesses, this is a real concern, and certainly to students themselves. It's one of the building blocks in how we prepare students throughout their education. It isn't just something that's a one-shot deal, that you're primed and away you go. Are we committed specifically to improving the ability of students to be literate upon graduation? Is it something that we promote and have we made a commitment to that throughout the educational period of their lives?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I know you have spoken to me about this before, Mr Coburn. It's certainly an interest of yours, as it is of mine, to make sure that students are getting the building blocks, if you will, in literacy and numeracy skills—reading, writing and mathematics. If they don't master those in the early grades, we're setting them up for failure wherever they go, either throughout the school system, in post-secondary or directly into the workforce.

There are a couple of steps we're taking to increase the ability of our young people to have good reading, writing and mathematical skills. First of all, it's built right into the curriculum from kindergarten right on through. A focus on English and French literacy skills, mathematical skills, reading, comprehension, writing—those are all built right in. For example, I had the oppor-

tunity to attend one of the summer institutes for teachers. We've put on some very successful training experiences for teachers on the new curriculum. They were explaining in the math class why it is they require the children in one of the junior grades to write out the math problems: not only are they teaching math, they're also helping reinforce the writing and comprehension skills, the literacy skills, at the same time. That's built right into the curriculum.

Secondly, we test to make sure we are actually doing the job, that the system is indeed managing to impart those skills—so grade 3, grade 6, grade 9. Today we started the grade 10 literacy test. So there are tests on those literacy skills and numeracy skills in 3, 6 and 9.

One of the reasons you test is to have information so you know if you are teaching these skills; if you're not, you've got the information to fix the problems. We've taken a number of steps already. I anticipate we'll be taking more as we learn more about how best to support good teachers in doing this.

There are additional monies this school year—\$70 million—for literacy from kindergarten to grade 3—those important early years—so we know that students are getting supports to get good literacy. If there are problems, teachers are able to identify that there is a young child with potentially something that might be a disability, for example. They have the ability to do that, that the supports are there. That's one important improvement. So that was one \$70 million.

Secondly, \$25 million this year went into remediation for some 80,000 students in grades 7 through 10. That is to help them get extra help, to pay for extra teachers, for example, and time for those teachers to give extra help to students in those grades who might need it on a range of things. But again, the focus is very much on literacy.

The teacher adviser program, again, is something where you have one teacher working with a small group of students to help them in setting their educational goals each year, achieving those goals, making good decisions about courses and where they want to go and the kinds of things they need to do to succeed. We also have special remedial courses and classes that are part of the education curriculum we offer. I must say, when I did the consultations to give me guidance and input on this year's funding, that was an important priority for many teachers, many parents, many school boards and whatever. It's certainly something I'm hearing a lot about again this year, so I hope we will be able to continue this focus on those good building block skills that our students need.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Before I ask the question, I just want to make a comment, if I may. I just got the list today of 45 students from my riding that have been granted scholarships by Aim for the Top. I just think it says wonderful things about the quality of students that we have in the system and their ability to aim for the top with good, hard work.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's our new scholarship program.

**Mr Stewart:** Yes. I just think it was absolutely wonderful. These students will get up to \$3,500 to go into post-secondary education. It's a wonderful program. I think this year it's something like \$8 million and by 2003 it will be \$35 million. It certainly gives those students the opportunity to move forward and get the education that we all want them to. That's kind of a sideline and I know it's not your ministry, but I was pretty proud to—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's another commitment we said we would do.

**Mr Stewart:** Absolutely. I'm pretty proud that 45 students qualified from my riding, my riding being 40% rural.

I know there was discussion—I guess it was yesterday or the day before—during the estimates committee regarding the remote and rural grant. It's my understanding that there is a considerable amount of work being done to improve this grant because, certainly, for rural Ontario and for some remote parts of northern Ontario, this is a major issue, I assume. The cost, in fact, for boards in those areas certainly is high. Can you give us an update on what's being done in the ministry to help remote and rural school boards?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's an important priority for many communities. Some of the school boards do have great, vast land masses, if you will, within their boundaries between schools. It's something we recognize specifically in how we fund boards, that there are specific grants, monies that boards get to compensate or support them in delivering education in remote and rural areas.

For example, we have a small schools allocation, a remote and rural allocation, a geographic allocation, additional funds for boards that have small schools, and in remote communities. This school year we also increased resources for principals for small schools because one of the challenges is that—it may be fine in a downtown area to have one principal, with vice-principal support, looking after two schools, but if those schools are several hundred miles apart, it doesn't work. Therefore, we gave boards more money to hire more principals this year for small schools.

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In addition, my colleague Ernie Eves, the finance minister, had a special \$600-million fund for Ontario small-town and rural development initiatives. One of those initiatives specifically targeted for education was additional monies on transportation devoted almost exclusively to northern and rural boards, again to recognize the challenges they face in transportation. As I said to Mr Bisson earlier—and I think this came up yesterday as well—it is one of the issues we've asked school boards to give us their advice and input on, how we can continue to improve that grant or those series of grants for boards with rural and northern challenges.

Long-range capital plans: boards are giving us that information and we'll be looking at that. We're looking at the transportation portion and if that is working as well as it could be. So there are a number of things we're

doing the work on now to see if we can better support boards in these areas.

**Mr Stewart:** Just a supplementary, if I can. I mentioned to you the public board in my area. Probably 40% of my riding is rural, and certainly other parts of the Kawartha Pine Ridge board. Can you tell me what the criteria are to be classed as a rural school board?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I can certainly do it generally, and if you'd like, my assistant deputy minister can go through it in more detail. It has to do with the distance between the board area and large urban centres. That has been one of the criteria we have used for that. Some school boards have said, "We should qualify. That board qualifies, this board doesn't qualify." So we're looking at the criteria that we have and, if it's not working the way it should, do we need to change the criteria.

Those are some of the issues, and I think Norbert Hartmann could maybe give a little better, refined explanation for how that works.

**The Vice-Chair:** Please state your name again.

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** I'm Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister, business and finance. The geographic authorities grant is made up of three components. There is the small schools component of it, and that has three factors in it. There is a school factor, which looks at the number of students in each grade, because the smaller the number of students, the more expensive it is to operate a school. There is a remoteness factor, and that looks at the distance between schools in the jurisdiction or twin schools in the jurisdiction. Then there is an enrolment factor in that portion of the grant. So that's one of the three components in the grant-to-small-schools allocation.

The second piece is a dimension that tends to measure how remote and how rural the area is, and that too has three components in it. There's a distance component that measures how far away the geographic centre of the school board is from major urban centres. Then there's an urban factor in it, which is used to discount when qualifying boards have a large urban centre with a population of more than 25,000 in it. Then there's the pupil sparsity number, which actually looks at what the distribution of pupils is across the jurisdiction of that board. The more widespread they are, obviously the more difficult it is to serve, the more transportation costs and so forth. So that makes up the remote and rural allocation.

Then there is also a school authorities grant, which deals with the remotest and sparsest areas of the province.

**Mr Stewart:** Do you have to—

**The Vice-Chair:** I just want to say that we hardly have two or three more minutes and Mr O'Toole had indicated—

**Mr Stewart:** Sorry.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Thank you for that explanation, Mr Hartmann. I have written to the minister on the Pine Ridge board decision, with very large geographical equations, and I am confident—there's a



task force, I guess, looking into that model. I just wanted to put that on the record here today.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Stewart, you've still got some time.

**Mr Stewart:** Does a rural board have to qualify for the total criteria or do you look at just portions of them?

**Mr Hartmann:** Those factors play independently of each other.

**Mr Stewart:** Of each board.

**Mr Hartmann:** The sparsity factor could put you in, for example—

**Mr Stewart:** Transportation, all of them, then. So that's how they did it. OK.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** About a minute.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's not much.

Minister, in 1995, I campaigned on improving the prospects for young people, because I consider, as our government does, that they are our greatest resource. We hear much talk about high-tech needs, but the employers are telling us that we have to balance this off with communication skills as well, and our students can improve their communication skills with real-life experience. Many of the constituents in my riding feel that we're not doing enough to enhance real-life experience. I wonder if you could comment on what we're doing to increase that and what the plans are in the future.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Wettlaufer, it's a good point. I think all of us remember our first job interview, where we walked in the door and the first thing the potential employer said was, "What's your experience?" "We don't have any." They won't hire us without experience, but nobody will hire us to get the experience. So it's a bit of a vicious circle.

One of the things we're doing—and it's a joint initiative of both myself and Minister Cunningham, both our ministries—is working in co-operation with school boards, community agencies and private sector employers to give young people in high school more exposure to the world outside, if you will, in terms of things like co-op programs, job-shadowing opportunities, experiences to acquaint them with the kinds of jobs, positions, careers that might interest them, that might be out there. The community involvement that is required of high school students, the minimum 40 hours that they do, also exposes them to a network of people who may be of assistance to them in the future. They start to do things within the community. They start to learn a little bit about what they like to do, what they may not like to do, what their skills are. All of those initiatives are taken to help them make the transition from school to work.

The initiative is called Passport to Prosperity. We have a wonderful group of school board and private sector leaders who are helping us, school board by school board, to expand the number of opportunities that our young people have to get that experience regardless of where they go—university, college or directly into the workplace.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I want to come back to your funding information in a moment. I just want to reiterate again, though, that you were going to provide funding reports that show the impact of inflation and enrolment. That's not what you provided today. Are those available today?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I just tabled information that funding has increased—

**Mr Kennedy:** No, specifically—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, you're asking me a question. Let me finish the answer, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** Madam Minister, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I just want to make sure I'm asking the right question.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair?

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Chair, through you, I just want to clarify my question—

**The Vice-Chair:** I just want a good dialogue happening, and if it starts again, I'm going to ask you to direct your questions to me, and the response back to me as well.

**Mr Kennedy:** I just want to make sure there isn't any mistake about the question, Mr Chair. I'm asking for figures which the minister promised us earlier that would show the ministry's assessment of their funding, through schools to students, with the impact of inflation and enrolment factored in. I'm asking specifically whether that's available, and I'm going to bundle the question, because the question is very simply answered. We were also going to get some information on extracurricular activity collected by the ministry. We were also going to get information about advertising detail, including who in the ministry has sign-off for that. We were going to get information about six out of eight and what that would cost, and the number of teachers. The number of teachers was asked last time. Some of these questions have already been asked since the 26th of this month. I'm just asking a simple question, which I believe is a yes or no answer: Is any of this information that I've enumerated available to us in this committee today so we can properly discuss it in the context of these estimates hearings? This is our last opportunity.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** In answer to the specific question on enrolment, if Mr Kennedy was listening, I said that our funding has gone up—I don't have the number right here in front of me, but it's on the record—some 5%. Inflation has gone up about 3% from 1995 until now. So that information is tabled. We've also provided other information.

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I also said to Mr Kennedy that because extracurricular activities are a voluntary activity that vary from school to school and board to board, we have not officially requested boards to file reports on extracurricular activities. So there is no report on extracurricular activities.

However, as Mr Kennedy well knows, there is information from school boards and also from the principals' council that has talked about their perception of what is or is not happening on extracurricular activities.



If Mr Kennedy would like us to ask boards for official reports and to file that, that is taking extracurricular activities into a different kind of activity. I didn't realize he thought we should go there, so that was not a commitment that was made.

**Mr Kennedy:** With respect, all of that would have been more succinctly answered in the negative. I think it's a fair question. I appreciate there is some commentary you wish to make, but I think in answering questions you could respect us all by either providing the information or telling us when it will be available, and if not, then I think we want to move on.

Quite frankly, this is incredible to me. You have a number of very talented civil servants here today. They've been here for three weeks. We are unable to get the most basic information from your ministry, and I think that's regrettable. We've been over this before. I've raised this every time to give you the opportunity to show us. I don't want to spend more time on information the minister refuses to provide. I would hope this information will be forthcoming.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We are not refusing to provide, for example, information on extracurricular activities. We do not collect official reports from school boards on extracurricular activities. I've answered that question before.

**The Vice-Chair:** Minister, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** Moving on to an area where I hope to get an answer, I'd like to ask specifically about some of the concerns of diverse communities in Ontario. There was a concern by these communities that equity doesn't have the place it had in the curriculum. It was one of the four principles before. People see that as a diminished emphasis in the new curriculum.

Very specifically, Mr Curling, in his capacity outside of the chair, Dalton McGuinty and a number of people met with concerned parents around the new safety policy the government has put forward. Specifically, they want me to ask you, Madam Minister, about that part of Bill 81 that refers to suspensions for different classes of people. It allows you to set in regulation different responses for what they see as offensive language, as dangerous language. I think it would help them to hear directly from you about why in that section, which is subsection 307(3), it talks about a regulation power that would set different standards, varied by regulation, established for different circumstances or different classes of persons. They are particularly worried that will stigmatize certain people and it will be misunderstood. I'm wondering whether you've heard this concern before and whether you have a response to those parents, which is one subset of their concerns about your so-called safe schools legislation.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd like to ask Aryeh Gitterman, who is in charge of this area, to explain what the legislation means.

**Mr Aryeh Gitterman:** Aryeh Gitterman, director of the policy and program branch. What the amendment to the Education Act provides for is, in the future, an ability

to accommodate special circumstances as the new requirements are implemented.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Gitterman, I guess what I was asking is, is this new information for the minister? I was hoping the minister herself had become aware, but I think in the absence it means she hasn't yet. But has the ministry heard—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not an accurate statement, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm happy to have your response on this. I'm looking forward to it. But just to make sure, the concern in a number of diverse communities is that the particular language that prescribes different classes of persons could be used against people who see themselves in different classes. I wonder if you've seen that concern. Is there a way that concern is going to be addressed specifically, as specifically as you can answer? I think that's all I can seek today.

**Mr Gitterman:** "Classes of persons" is a term used by our lawyers and other legislative support to describe categories or groups specifically for legal purposes. It does not refer to "class" with any other meaning associated with it. It's purely a way to describe a grouping of people, for example, special education students. It's generic language used for that purpose.

**Mr Kennedy:** Again to my question, has the minister heard of this concern before? You're saying in that answer it's groundless in the sense that you're saying it's only a technical term. But have you heard this concern? Have there been any meetings, discussions, any efforts made to assure parents who are concerned seeing this language in the context of a bill, which they're concerned could end up stigmatizing certain students unfairly?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It's not designed nor could it be used to target particular categories or groups. That's one of the reasons the ministry has taken great care to work with school boards to phase in this legislation. That legislation has been vetted as appropriate to make sure that language is standard legislative language that meets all of the different requirements around human rights etc that any government would want to meet. One of the reasons we are phasing in the requirements in the Safe Schools Act is to ensure that principals and teachers have the ability to deal with this well.

The other concern that this accommodates is the special circumstances that some special-needs students may well require, and that is clearly provided for not only in the legislation but also in the policy and procedures we are following.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate, in the generality, what you said, that this is something that will not be used for that purpose. That's the assurance people want to hear, and I think they will be holding you to that. I know their concerns and I didn't get quite the response, but these are very sincerely held concerns. I want to convey that on their behalf. This is not something that is lightly taken in a number of those communities.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have, for example, a special education advisory committee of people who represent

special-needs organizations and special-needs students. They have been part of the policy development around this, for example, so I think you can ease your mind about this. The legal protections are indeed there, as they should be.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's not my mind that needs easing, Minister.

**Mr Tascona:** It's Alvin's mind.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's parents who find this is a particular difficulty. I wouldn't make light of it, members opposite. These are parents who don't believe this legislation, safe schools, is well put in the sense that they have seen and they see, in the way that this is going forward, that it may indeed disadvantage certain kids. I think that at least has to be accepted as a point of view, I'd say to the members opposite.

I'd like to ask a question around the literacy tests today. You mentioned in response to what I'm sure wasn't a prearranged question, but which had some nice symmetry to it, on the part of one of the members opposite, a commitment to literacy. In this past year, you have made a cut of about—we can guess because you will not give us the figure—\$150 million, taken away from the value of the time you say teachers cannot spend—about 25% less, half of the time—with students. You give them 25% more students and half the time. That's what your Bill 74 does.

Here we are in a year where it's least likely—what the students sitting behind you told me this afternoon was the in-between time. The students sitting behind you from Rockland are saying it's the hardest year ever to have in-between time, which is to catch teachers between classes, to get those extra questions answered. That's what you have taken away, what is basically the remedial time teachers provide to people who are in difficulty.

I want to ask you, are you prepared at this time to specifically—especially given the fact that your total resources to schools have been cut since 1995—commit that if the literacy tests, when they come back, demonstrate problems for specific students in specific schools, that you will be allocating specific additional resources to those schools in order to address the function of those schools to be able to address students' needs?

I want to say that out there in the real world schools are looking at this test as highly disruptive. They've had to pay supply teachers. In some places, they've had to rent desks to hold these in gymnasiums. Some of them have had to postpone or rearrange other classes. They want to know if you're really committed to this better literacy for students and this isn't a see-you-later kind of test for students who won't get any help. Will you today tell us how much additional funds you will be providing to schools and to students who, through this test, are shown to be struggling with their ability to be literate?

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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Chair, first of all, I'd like to express my frustration. I don't know why we bother to table the information that we table when the honourable member continues to make inaccurate statements. There

has been no—and I don't know what figure he's talking about—\$150-million cut to education; again, another figure pulled out of the hat that has no bearing in reality in terms of what's going on in the funding in the education system. We have talked about that. It is more, not less. Again, we have another figure pulled out of a hat.

Secondly, the grade 10 literacy test is consistent with the kind of testing that many jurisdictions around the world do, to make sure that they are indeed providing their students with the literacy skills they require. The reason we increased monies this school year for remedial help for grades 7 through 10 was to deal precisely with this issue, if there are students who require remediation.

The second thing is that we specifically added into the definition of "instructional time" "remediation," because we quite recognized that is an important activity of teachers and that is specifically recognized. We put money in to make that happen as well, because we recognized that resource is required. Those monies are already allocated.

We are in the process again, as the honourable member knows, since I explained this to him the other day, of consulting with our education partners about funding requirements for next year, as we do every year. He may think we should pluck a number out of a hat. I think it's more important for us to continue to work with our education partners to set appropriate resource levels not only for remediation but for other important priority areas.

**Mr Kennedy:** Madam Minister, I'm sorry you're not willing to make commitments, as you haven't been all along, to do some of the things that you purport you're supposed to be doing.

You don't have any curriculum for basic-level kids in the schools. That was your choice. Every school I've visited has said they have to make up their own curriculum for basic-level kids. Anywhere from 15% to 16% or 17% of kids have been left out. The \$150 million that you want to ignore—you won't table a figure for what it would cost us to do six out of eight. You, after three weeks, are too afraid to put on the table the cost of moving to six out of eight in the school system. You are afraid of that, apparently. We'll deal with the funding that you've been afraid to tell us about, that you won't table the figures for.

I would ask you specifically, if you're not going to give basic kids their own curriculum, if you're not going to recognize that 15% of kids have struggled—they were recognized by previous curriculums—if you're not going to provide that and you're going to have a literacy test and you're not going to attach specific funds yet—I heard with slight hopefulness that you might be—to their outcome, are you not just saying to kids who are struggling, "We don't want you in school"? Minister, I ask you, how many kids are going to want a big "L" on their forehead, to know that they failed a literacy test and they will not get extra remediation as a direct result, that they will not have a much better prospect?



That is a difficulty for kids who are already struggling. You aren't providing for basic-needs kids who are struggling in the system. You took away the extra time they used to receive from some of their teachers this year and you're bringing in this test. I'm asking you, will you ensure that these basic-level kids get some extra resources in order to succeed rather than being intimidated out of school?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I stated before, we have already put new money out for this school year specifically for remediation. I don't know how many more times I can tell him this, Mr Chair, but we have indeed—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, it's in night school. You're giving it for continuing education.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No, no. That money is specifically targeted, if he's saying a school board's using it for something else, that's another issue and we can deal with that. But that money is specifically targeted for students—there are some 80,000 students, grades 7 to 10—for remediation. That's what that money—

**Mr Kennedy:** Twenty-seven million for continuing ed is what you've put out there.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** No. Mr Kennedy, would you stop misreading the information? It is \$25 million for remediation. It has nothing to do with—

**Mr Kennedy:** After school, after school.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Kennedy, no, it does not. The school boards have a great deal of flexibility. If he likes, we could go out the door and say, "No, no, no. You can only provide remediation this way as opposed to that way," but if we did that, he would be the first one saying there we go, dictating to boards. That's not appropriate.

The school boards are receiving additional monies for remediation in a variety of different levels. When you're doing curriculum that provides our students with what they need when they leave high school, we don't sit there and say, "We're going to write off 15% of the students. They're not able to learn things." That's what he is suggesting. We do not agree with that.

No student should have big letters stamped on their forehead, Mr Kennedy. That is not the policy. We have curriculum that has been carefully designed to provide our young people with the information and knowledge they need, whether they're going to university or directly into the workforce, wherever their destination is. More resources have been and are, as we speak, being provided for school boards to do remediation. It is specifically recognized in the definition of "instructional time." As I've said here earlier before, the change in instructional time works out to an average of 20, 25 minutes. I'm sure Mr Kennedy is not asking us to believe that school-teachers out there only did 20 minutes worth of remediation.

**Mr Kennedy:** Because it's such an important question, Mr Chair, I had asked—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Teachers out there did much more and do much more than they ever do in classroom on remediation, and we specifically recognized and provided funding to help support that.

**Mr Kennedy:** I appreciate the minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Minister. As you said, it's important, but you'll have to wait until the next 10 minutes come around. We've got about 30 minutes left, and I'm going to say that we'll have 10 minutes for the NDP, 10 minutes for the government and 10 minutes for the official opposition. Mr Bisson.

**Mr Bisson:** No.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're not taking your 10 minutes?

**Mr Bisson:** No. Twenty here, 10 left over there. You can do what you want with the last 10.

**The Vice-Chair:** No, no.

**Interjection:** That's the rule, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** As I stated, there's 30 minutes left and I will divide it up in 10 minutes here, 10 minutes here and 10 minutes here. The Chair has the right to do that.

**Mr Bisson:** That's interesting. All right.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** Mr Chair, may I? Excuse me coming in at the last minute, but as I understand the rotation, it would be the opportunity for the New Democratic caucus to have 20 minutes at this point in time. Your decision—and you're exercising your discretion, as you say—is actually taking time away from our caucus and our questioning in the overall estimates in terms of the fair share of it. I would ask you to reconsider that. We've just had an opportunity for the Liberal caucus to exercise a 20-minute rotation. I think that had you decided at that point in time to split what was left on the clock three ways, that would be one thing. But now that we're beginning with the New Democratic Party and our turn for a 20-minute rotation, it's actually an unfair application of your discretion.

**Mr Bisson:** Just further to the point, Chair, we started off this meeting at the very beginning where you asked for unanimous consent and I refused, and I still refuse. So it's 20 minutes and I will start.

**The Vice-Chair:** I did ask for unanimous consent, but as a matter of fact—

**Mr Bisson:** You can't change the rules midstream, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** May I? I gave you your chance, Mr Bisson. Will you allow me?

**Mr Bisson:** And I'll challenge the Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** You can also do that.

**Mr Bisson:** Very good.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's stated here—and I can read it for you—

**Mr Bisson:** Then the problem is that if you're going to come in and chair a meeting you should understand the rules before you come in and not change them halfway through the process.

**The Vice-Chair:** I didn't. I asked—

**Mr Bisson:** What was supposed to happen—you asked for unanimous consent at the beginning. I did not give you unanimous consent. I was clear about it at the beginning, and for you now all of a sudden to learn the rules halfway through the process is not acceptable. Either you know them coming in or you don't.



**The Vice-Chair:** May I respond?

**Mr Bisson:** You're being—

**The Vice-Chair:** I am responding now. Could you give me a chance? It's stated here, "...estimates is allowed not more than 30 minutes for a right of reply. Thereafter, the Chair of the standing committee on estimates shall ensure that the members adhere strictly to the vote and item under consideration and shall apportion the remaining time among the recognized parties on the committee." The remaining time is 30 minutes. I therefore apportioned 10 minutes, 10 minutes and 10 minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Just a point on that question. We have done this with every caucus fairly, sometimes disadvantaging or advantaging, but whenever we've had fraction time remaining, we have always allocated it between the three. This is what we have done in this committee for some time.

**Mr Bisson:** I pretty well see what the hell's going on here.

**Mr Kennedy:** We did this with the last ministry.

**Mr Bisson:** You can't all of a sudden come in, Chair, and say you want unanimous consent at the beginning of the committee, then change the rules because your caucus is disadvantaged. That's what you're doing. You're being extremely partisan in what you're trying to do here.

**Mr Kennedy:** Last time we advantaged your caucus—

**Mr Bisson:** The point is, this committee was asked to deal with unanimous consent. I refused; I still refuse. Quite frankly, I'm dismayed that you would try to come in here and utilize your position to give your caucus another 10 minutes, because that's what you're up to.

**The Vice-Chair:** I resent that comment.

**Mr Bisson:** Well, I damn well mean it.

**The Vice-Chair:** The fact is that you think I'm using this to give an advantage to my caucus.

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**Ms Lankin:** I think the point I want to make is slightly different than what I've heard, although I will reiterate my colleague's point that, having at the beginning asked for unanimous consent to split the time three ways, having that denied, and then reverting to the 20-minute rotation, you did set a precedent for the way this meeting is conducted.

I would suggest that if there is, as Mr Kennedy has said, a fraction of time left, that it be split three ways. That might happen after the New Democratic caucus has completed its 20 minutes. Whatever time is left on the clock at that point in time, it would be appropriate to split it three ways. I am sure there would be unanimous consent at that point in time to do that.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me explain this. Initially, I asked for consent, that we have 30 minutes and could we agree on that? It wasn't within the rules; it was just my way of having it fairly done. They said no. The rules here state specifically—not the rules that I "make up"—that the remaining time may be distributed equally. I understand that the Chair's ruling is not debatable, but you may appeal my ruling.

**Mr Bisson:** Listen, Chair, I'm not going to argue, because it's taking time away from the estimates. I'll agree to consent, but I'm telling you, you can't come in here, not know the rules, ask for unanimous consent, and all of a sudden, when you figure out your party's been disadvantaged, come in and decide to play by the rules. That's what has happened here and that's what I take exception to. If you want to ask for unanimous consent I'll give it to you.

**The Vice-Chair:** What we're getting into is a debate on my ruling, and the ruling of the Chair is not debatable. If you want to appeal my ruling, fine, but I won't allow a debate to continue. Are we going to debate or are we going to continue?

**Mr Kennedy:** For the record, Mr Chair, I am assuming that this is a result of a calculation by the clerk of fair allocation to all three parties over the course of this hearing. Rather than the grandstanding that we're getting here, how much time overall went to the NDP, to the Liberals and to the Conservatives?

**The Vice-Chair:** I'm not going to allow any more sorts of points of order or debates or so on. I've said that the ruling is not debatable.

**Mr Tascona:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: To try to spend this along, we consent. So let's get started.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're giving him your 10 minutes?

**Mr Tascona:** No. I consent to let's get going, to equal allocation.

**Ms Lankin:** You consent to the Chair's ruling. That's nice.

**Mr Tascona:** Well, Gilles has consented. We're going to consent too.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are we proceeding?

**Mr Tascona:** We're ready to start, Mr Chair.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you. So how much time do we have now?

**The Vice-Chair:** Ten minutes.

**Mr Bisson:** You would know that a program that exists that's been put in place by the Legislature for some time is the Ontario young travellers program. You would know what that's all about: young people from northern Ontario who want to come by here with their grade 8 or grade 7 classes, travel down to the Legislature in order to participate and look at what happens in this Legislature in the springtime. You would know that the money that is allocated for the young travellers hasn't been changed in numerous years.

One of the complaints I've received from many of the schools and principals from across my riding has been that, because everybody is out fundraising, trying to raise dollars for all kinds of reasons because of a whole bunch of other policy decisions your government has made, they're finding it very difficult to raise the necessary dollars to bring these children down to Queen's Park.

I am wondering if your ministry, or you, as minister, have actually looked at the issue of trying to increase the budget for the young travellers program so that it more closely reflects what the actual costs of travel are today.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I have certainly heard a concern raised, and if you would like to provide us with information about what's happening in your community, that's certainly something I can ask staff to take a look at. As I said, we're in the process now of making decisions for the next round of funding, the next grant reg, so this would be a good time for us to take a look at that.

**Mr Bisson:** When is that decision going to be made?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The usual process is we go out the door as early in March as we can get out the door. I was out—

**Mr Bisson:** But the decision for this year's budget, that's what I'm asking.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Oh, for this year's budget?

**Mr Bisson:** The money that will be allocated—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For the current school year we're in right now?

**Mr Bisson:** Yes.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'll ask the deputy if she has any further information on the process on that.

**Ms Sue Herbert:** The budget has been structured for this year, for 2000-01. The consultation process we do through the fall is for next year's school year budget. We go through a fairly rigorous consultation process for about three or four months in the fall and that leads into the government decision-making process over the early winter and spring.

**Mr Bisson:** So we have time if we get it in before Christmastime?

**Ms Herbert:** Yes, you have time.

**Mr Bisson:** I just want to get a sense that we're not going to be doing this and spinning our wheels and not going anywhere. I know you take this issue seriously. I think you believe, as I do, it's important to give young people the opportunity to see what happens here. I just want to know that if the principals follow up with the suggestion they've made to me, which is to actually provide this information to demonstrate that it's costing more—as you well can understand, the price of gas, rental of buses and all that is much more expensive—there is actually going to be active consideration to increase the funding to the young travellers program. I'm looking for no other answer but yes, and if you give me that, I will make sure to provide you with that information.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, serious consideration. I can't say whether we will or we won't, but we'll certainly look at material that they provide, and I certainly hear the concern that's been expressed.

**Mr Bisson:** That's fair.

The other issue we had raised last year, and unfortunately it wasn't resolved, is the issue of attracting teachers to James Bay. If you remember at estimates last year, there was a whole issue where isolate school boards used to get money from the provincial government in order to offset the cost of trying to get rental accommodation in a community like Moosonee or Moose Factory. I don't need to explain to you that it's fairly difficult to get accommodation in the first place.

Second of all, if you're just paying teachers the regular rate of pay that they get to teach in Timmins or Toronto or Oshawa, it's pretty darn hard to attract them into Moosonee or Moose Factory to teach our young people in those communities. At that time there was going to be an undertaking to take a look at the possibility of providing a continuation of the program to help subsidize the rent as an attraction to be able to attract those teachers into the communities. I am wondering if we can get a bit of an update as to where we're at with that and what we can expect.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I will ask Nancy Naylor to give us an update on this.

**Ms Nancy Naylor:** I'm Nancy Naylor. I'm the director of education finance for the Ministry of Education.

The subsidies that you're referring to are commonly referred to as teacherages. There are 37 school authorities and we fund them on a slightly different basis than we fund school boards. It's done on a fairly negotiated basis. Their circumstances tend to be so idiosyncratic that finance officers from the ministry work directly with the staff of the school authorities and negotiate a budget that works for that year. They do it in reference to the funding model that applies to the school boards, but they have the flexibility to approve a budget that takes into account their particular situation.

So on a year-to-year basis, depending on the housing needs of the teachers that that school authority has hired for that year, they would take into account those costs. The finance officers would have a certain amount of discretion to approve what was appropriate. If there was a school authority that had a particular concern about it, we'd be happy to look into it.

**Mr Bisson:** To clarify, just so you understand—

**The Vice-Chair:** At this point, you have about a minute. What we have done is cut back everyone for the time remaining to seven minutes a round.

**Mr Bisson:** Very good. You do an excellent job, Chair, playing with time.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. You're so co-operative.

**Mr Bisson:** No wonder they didn't make you Minister of Education or Finance.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Bisson, we need to follow up afterwards with you on this.

**Mr Bisson:** Yes. I just want to be clear, though, because there was a fear on the part of those isolate boards that those dollars that are specifically directed towards the teacherage grants would actually be reduced or eliminated. There's still that rumour circulating.

**Ms Naylor:** That's right. This issue was raised last year and we made the finance officers aware of it so they could pursue that.

**Mr Bisson:** So the answer is yes, the funding will continue.

**Ms Naylor:** Yes.

**Mr Bisson:** The answer is yes.

**Ms Naylor:** That's correct.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you.



**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Bisson. Mr Tascona, seven minutes.

**Mr Tascona:** Certainly during the estimates we've been provided with information from the ministry. The graph with respect to multi-year history of school board spending, provincial grants and property taxes, shows an increase from 1995, when it was at \$12.8 billion, to the 2000-01 projections at \$13.5 billion, which is a significant increase.

Also the chart we've been provided with, the history of classroom versus non-classroom allocation, shows that that has been increasing also over the periods of 1997 versus 2000-01, and in fact the classroom spending has been increasing and is the lion's share of spending in terms of the allocation.

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We also have the chart with respect to multi-year history of total board administration and governance, and that shows that that has been decreasing significantly. In 1997 it was at \$599 million and in 2000-01 projections it's at \$442 million. So there's less money that's going into that area, at the decision of the school boards obviously.

We received yesterday the special education allocation, which shows that for every school board in the province they have received an increased allocation over 1999-2000. For the 2000-01 allocation it has increased over the previous year. As the minister has indicated, the government currently provides in excess of \$1.35 billion for special education across the province, more than any other government in Ontario's history, and this is an increase of 12% over the 1999-2000 period.

I want to ask the minister a question on special education, if I may. Minister, the opposition has improperly alleged repeatedly that the government has cut special education funding since it came into office. You tabled a chart yesterday on the special education allocation for each school board, as I just referenced. The chart clearly demonstrates that every school board in this province has received a significant increase in special education funding. I know this government has been working to improve special education in this province. In January of this year you indicated that this government would invest an estimated \$40 million to increase the intensive support amount, which is the ISA. In fact, this government has invested \$43 million. So can you tell this committee what you're doing to improve special education across the province?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** This was when I met with teacher federations last year. One of the priority issues for increased funding and better standards and programming that they highlighted, as did parents, was the special-needs area. So we have indeed increased funding again this year and, as the chart shows, there have been increases to school boards on special-needs funding.

It's also important to recognize that we went to school boards when we were designing the new way to fund school boards. We went to school boards and said, "What do you spend on special education?" That was the basis

upon which we started. Because of concerns from boards that that still was not enough, we topped it up the first year, we topped it up again last year, and we're topping it up this year 12% just in a one-year increase. We provided guarantees for boards to try and provide some stability.

I specifically asked our partners, as we go through the consultations in terms of improvements for succeeding years, "Do we still require money in two ways—one, in a very flexible grant?" "Yes," they said, so that they indeed get that through what we call SEPPA. The second thing was, "Do we still need a process by which we recognize the number of special-high-needs students that a board has?" They said, "Yes, we need that process; we need to have a way to identify and determine that need from board to board," although they also asked for more flexibility in how they could spend that money, and we did that this year, again at their request.

We also know that we need to continue to take steps on designing with school boards what good special education programming is, because that's one of the things that boards had said would help them in doing a better job. Parents certainly have said they'd like to know what they should be expecting, especially when you look at what needs to be done for certain children with certain exceptionalities. In some cases this is work that no other jurisdiction has done, to actually sit down and say for a child of particular exceptionality, "What should a school or school board be providing this child to help them achieve their educational goals?"

It's exciting new work, it's important work, and it will allow us to use those increased resources in a much better fashion as we work with boards to meet their educational needs for those students.

**Mr Tascona:** How much more time, Mr Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Wettlaufer was asking for some time, and you have two minutes.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Madam Minister, Mr Kennedy was talking before about grade 10 literacy, the amount of work that's going into it and why it was needed. It's obvious that we're not getting through to them and perhaps to members of the public as to why we have improved the curriculum, why we're putting stress on literacy.

I can recall that prior to 1995 many of the university professors were so disgusted with the level of literacy of the high school students that many were incorporating into their own system a literacy test for students before they could take the courses that they wanted to.

As recently as about 18 months ago, Jim Downey, who is the past president of the University of Waterloo and a very harsh critic of the education system under the previous governments, complimented us on our new curriculum and what we were doing with the education system. He said it much more amply prepared the students for university.

God forbid that we fail anybody, because they might think that life is a bowl of cherries and that they can't fail even in life later on, but I would like you to mention again, because I couldn't hear the figures with the



amount of time that you were being interrupted by Mr Kennedy—not everybody should fail, but what are the dollars being put into remediation for those students who don't make it?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The special monies that went in for remediation for students from grades 7 to 10 this year are \$25 million. That was to recognize the need for more resources in that area, so we have indeed done that. There are also—

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

Mr Kennedy, you've got seven minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** I want to come back to where we started off, Madam Minister, and that's funding. You can say you gave this or you gave that, but the fundamentals are, you're giving back little trinkets compared to what you've already cut.

Minister, you made a commentary, but you did not produce any counter-figures from your ministry at all about whether your share of funding, which I think you're perhaps confusing with the total funding—but your share of funding has gone down. There's more reliance on the property tax since you've come into power than there was before, if you take out the download.

Minister, what I want to come back to you and ask you about—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Well, we just tabled the chart for you, Mr Kennedy, that has those figures on it.

**Mr Kennedy:** —the elemental thing for this government—

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd be glad to give you another copy if you've lost it in the last hour.

**Mr Kennedy:** If I don't have you jumping in, Minister, I'm going to come back to you right on those numbers that you say you've given to us, and I want to ask you about them. I want to ask you why you think schools are immune from inflation, that those numbers shouldn't be taken into account in terms of looking at what their costs are.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, none of us is immune from inflation.

**Mr Kennedy:** In other words, that's not the reason why you haven't included it.

Minister, you show here, or at least your staff show, board administration and governance. I think the deputy has addressed this question before, but he'd promised to come back with some more specifics. Deputy and Minister, this is a copy of a Ministry of Education and Training funding report, and it indicates that the spending in 1995-96 on board administration and governance was \$415 million. You've given us a chart today that says, in 1995, \$600 million; in 1996, \$581 million.

We've raised this question before. The figures I referred to earlier depend on your detailed figures. Do you have with you today some detailed figures that reconcile this previously published report and the figures that you've given us today, something very specific so we can reconcile that? Otherwise, Minister, it looks like you're padding the administration and governance

figures from before, because this is the only published study that we know of. What that shows, just to show you the importance of those figures, is, if we took your published study at face value, it suggests actually that spending on administration and governance by boards has increased. Further, if you apply the fair test, which we think is to include inflation and enrolment, then in fact, yes, there's a decrease, but it's minor. In the whole province you've only been able to reduce administration and governance by 4%, or \$26 a student, while you're cutting \$918 a student.

In Mr Coburn's area in Ottawa—incredibly, because Mr Coburn spoke favourably about your policies—\$1,423 per student has been cut. As Mr Coburn knows, they're being cut again next year. Mr Tascona talked about special education, and I guess he thinks that if his area is cut by \$450 a student, that's OK, too. But the money's not coming out of board administration. There's a discrepancy in these two figures and I wonder if we could have the specific figures in front of us that would reconcile your published data with the table you just gave us, because it's out by about \$170 million or \$185 million dollars.

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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we'd be quite happy to have Nancy Naylor from the ministry discuss this, but I find it a tad interesting that on the one hand we're getting criticized because we're not providing information, and yet the honourable member is sitting here with stacks of paper—

**Mr Kennedy:** That contradicts, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —that he has received from this ministry, with tables and information that are available to him and to members of the public, that talk about our spending and our funding. So I would like to turn this over—

**Mr Kennedy:** If our figures are completely accurate, then that's fine. We'll leave them to the public record.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —to Nancy Naylor, who can answer the question that Mr Kennedy has put forward.

**Ms Naylor:** I'm Nancy Naylor. I'm the director of the education finance branch. With respect to the definition of administration and governance, you are comparing two numbers that aren't strictly comparable. The document you have in your hand is one that was published in 1997. It's the 1995-96 report on school board spending. That was one of the first publications the government produced that attempted to define classroom and non-classroom spending, an issue that was first raised by Mr Sweeney in the task force on school board amalgamation. In that report, the government relied on Mr Sweeney's suggestions around the definition of administration, but it's a fairly narrow one in that respect, and you're right, it does add up to \$400 and something—I'm sorry, you quoted the figure and I'm presuming that you're right.

What the government did when it finalized the student-focused funding model is adopt a much broader definition of administration and governance. Effectively, anything beyond the principal is administration and

governance. That includes the board, the trustee expenses, the supervisory officers, what's referred to as instructional supervision in those reports. All of those functions—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm going to interrupt you, just through the Chair. I want to ask very clearly—because we won't have time to hear it listed here today—will you table a reconciliation of those numbers, if it exists? And, Ms Naylor, I want to ask you very directly, do you have a reconciliation for all of the categories before the new funding formula and post the new funding formula? I have asked for those; they haven't been made available. I want to know from you specifically, because you are answering on the minister's behalf, do those categories of reconciliation exist and can those figures be tabled so we can see for ourselves what the difference is now that you've changed your definition of board governance? If the Minister would like to answer as well, I'm looking for board governance and all of the categories, because what you've done is restated what board administration is. I think we need to see how you've done that. I'd also like to see how you've restated other categories so we can compare what you've cut with what actually is there today. Can we have those from either the minister or Ms Naylor?

**The Vice-Chair:** I think with that statement—

**Mr Kennedy:** Just a yes or no, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** —we have concluded the estimates for education and we shall proceed to the vote.

**Mr Kennedy:** I guess the minister's afraid of it; I don't know. Just a yes or a no?

**The Vice-Chair:** Now that we've concluded the estimates for the Ministry of Education, we should move to the vote. We've got two votes to do.

We shall vote on 1001. Is that vote carried? Carried.

Now we shall vote on 1002. Carried.

Shall the estimates—

**Mr Bisson:** Recorded vote. I want a recorded vote.

**The Vice-Chair:** Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Education carry?

**Interjection:** No.

**Interjections:** Carried.

**The Vice-Chair:** I heard it should be carried, so I presume we should ask for a vote. All those in favour?

**Mr Bisson:** It's a recorded vote. All those in favour of supporting the estimates?

**The Vice-Chair:** You want a recorded vote?

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, I do.

## Ayes

Coburn, Stewart, Tascona, Wettlaufer.

## Nays

Bisson, Kennedy, Peters.

**The Vice-Chair:** It shall be carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Education to the House? I think I hear a yes. Carried.

That concludes it. Thank you very much to the minister and the staff who have been so patient. I appreciate very much your co-operation. It has been a grueling test of time. Thank you very much.

I ask for a 10-minute recess and then we shall resume with the Ministry of Health.

*The committee recessed from 1715 to 1725.*

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I call the members to order. Thank you very much, Minister, for your attendance today. It's time to at least begin. As everyone knows, we're here for the consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Health. We commence with vote 1401, item 1. We begin with a 30-minute statement by the minister, 30 minutes for the official opposition, 30 minutes for the third party and 30 minutes for the government. Then the minister has 30 minutes to reply and the remaining time, out of the total of 7.5 hours, will be apportioned equally among the three parties. Just as a prelude to that, people who were at the last session, we will keep a running total so that everyone is apprised of how that split works out in advance and there won't be any surprises.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** I just wanted to indicate that when we reconvene next week—I'm expecting that today we will just have the opportunity for the minister to make her statement—we would certainly be willing at that point in time, as opposed to doing responses, to move straight to questioning. I just put that on the table now. It's something that other caucuses—I think Mrs McLeod is of the same opinion. Perhaps the government caucus may want to consider that and we may at that point in time request unanimous consent. But I just put it on the table as an opportunity.

**The Chair:** There are two ways for that to proceed. I think in the past it's basically been up to the agreement of the minister and it hasn't had to go to a formal discussion. But at that time we'll certainly turn to that and see how the minister is disposed and see how the committee is disposed.

Minister, without further ado, I'd like to welcome you and invite you to make your opening statement to the committee.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman and members of the committee. I'm certainly very pleased to be here to review with you the estimates for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for the year 2000-01. With me today is the assistant deputy minister.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you some of the achievements that have been made this past year with respect to Ontario's health and long-term care system. Certainly I'm pleased to be able to outline for you some of our future directions.



Since taking on the responsibility for this portfolio three years ago yesterday, I have spent a considerable amount of time seeking the views of people in this province, particularly those people who have a direct stake in the system, be they providers or patients. I'm pleased to say that as a result of those discussions and as a result of input, there seems to be consensus on the progress we are making in regard to health system reform and also in regard to the basic principles that shape our vision for the future of health services in Ontario.

Some of those common principles would be that there is support for accessible, integrated, quality services provided across the broad spectrum of our health system. There is certainly support for enhanced and accessible community-based services; there is support that we would continue to reform our system in a way that we would move forward with primary care reform; and there is support that we would improve coordination among the health stakeholders and also for better utilization of services.

There is support for enhanced use of information and information technology to improve our decision-making capability and support that there be accessible health information provided to people in this province in order to help them to make better choices, more informed choices and decisions. Certainly there is the anticipation that we will move forward with providing health services that are going to be capable of meeting the needs of our growing and aging population.

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As a result of the fact that there is general support for these principles, we as a government will be continuing to carry out the most ambitious reform of the provincial health system that has ever been undertaken, not only in this province but in Canada.

In order to realize our goals, we've had to make some very difficult decisions, but I'm also pleased to say that as a result of some of those decisions, we have been able to work co-operatively with our health care partners and, as a result of the advice and input, we have been able to achieve some very good and very positive results, recognizing that there is always more work that needs to be done.

Let's just take a look at some of the events that are unfolding as we take a look at the health care system. I mentioned that there is general support for primary care and I'm pleased to say that at the present time we have seven primary care pilot projects in place throughout the province. As you know, as a result of the recent agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, we are able to move forward and hope to move forward over the next four years and at the end of the four years have approximately 80% of the eligible family physicians moved into primary care. That will improve accessibility to primary care services and it will mean there is 24-hour care seven days a week. Also, within those primary care networks we hope to have different health stakeholders working together.

We see one of the key health professionals who will play a very important role being the nurse practitioner and the nurse, and of course others that may be involved would be psychologists and social workers and certainly other health stakeholders as well.

I think that is an exciting move that we're going to be making in order to improve accessibility to services throughout Ontario. As I say, there will be considerable movement in the next four years, as we move forward to ensure that 80% of our family physicians who are eligible move into primary care networks, and that will be a team of health professionals working together.

As you know, we also set up 43 community care access centres. We moved from a situation where people had access to different centres of information. We now have what we call one-stop shopping, and people have indicated it's much easier to get information about community services and long-term care services. We're presently doing a review of those community care access centres because we feel that they've been operational for about three years, and I think we have to take a look to see if they are indeed achieving the goal, if the level of service that is being provided is appropriate. We need to take a look at the strength of that particular system and I think also take a look at where there are opportunities for improvement. So we look forward to working not only with those involved within the community care access centres but also with stakeholders who use the system—whatever we can do to better achieve the objectives.

We're continuing with hospital restructuring, and I think for anybody who is out travelling through the province, we've not seen this amount of construction for a long, long time. We have new hospitals being constructed. In fact, Mrs McLeod would certainly be aware of the fact that in Thunder Bay there is a new hospital. We have one in North Bay and we have others that are requesting new hospitals. Peterborough has been given a new hospital as well. But we also have about 56 hospitals that are expanding their emergency rooms and we've been able to fast-track those emergency rooms. We are constructing three new cardiac centres in the province, in York, Peel and the region of Waterloo. We have five additional cancer centres that will be available to meet the demands of patients. It's all part of bringing these services closer to home. Those are in Waterloo, Peel, Durham, Sault Ste Marie and St Catharines.

We're expanding other cancer services as well in the existing centres, because unfortunately we are seeing an increase of about 3% in the rate of individuals who are getting cancer. We need to make sure we have the space available to provide the treatment. At the same time, we're moving forward with the human resource strategy in order to ensure we have the oncologists, the physicists and the radiation therapists.

As you know, we are recruiting these radiation therapists from overseas and from the United States. But I know as recently as last week, when I met with my colleague health ministers, we're all in competition because the shortage of radiation therapists is one that is



being experienced by all of us across Canada. Although we're now paying ours a very competitive rate with very good benefits, there is a tremendous number of people coming in and out of the system. We will continue to focus on ensuring that we have the human resources to staff our centres.

I'm also pleased to say that we're looking at further ways to increase the number of educational opportunities for radiation therapists. We have increased the class size from 50 to 75, and we're looking now at ways to expand even beyond that and hopefully make that program available to people in more parts of the province. It's presently concentrated primarily in Toronto.

We are moving forward. We've put a lot of money into priority programs. Priority programs are programs where we have a tremendous amount of need. I've spoken to you about the increased access we're providing for cancer care and cardiac care, but unfortunately we're also seeing an increased number of people with diabetes, about 10% per year. We are making sure there are facilities to treat those who have some of the consequences. We are making sure that dialysis centres are available throughout the province. I think we've added about 30 dialysis centres, and we hope to be in a position in the near future to speak about further plans that we would have to bring this service closer to home.

I think anybody who has the need for dialysis recognizes the toll it takes on their personal life. We're doing everything we can to move as many services as we can as close to home as possible so that whether you live in the north, the south, the east or the west, hopefully you can easily avail yourself. I have certainly been touched by many people who have suddenly had dialysis services available close to home and no longer have to travel. They're just absolutely thrilled that they can get on with day-to-day living without having to worry about the winter driving, the whole day driving back and forth or staying overnight. I can assure you our government will continue to increase access to dialysis services.

Hip and knee is another priority program. Unfortunately, with the aging population we have many people who need hip and knee replacements.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, careful what you say about aging. I just had my knee replaced last year; it's not always a function of age.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would agree. We can be any age and we certainly do want to make sure that whatever age you need this, it will be there. Those are some of the priority programs where we've spent a considerable amount of money in recent years.

Part of the problem is in increasing the number of physicians in the province. As you know, we've had a long-standing problem, not only in Ontario, but again last week it was an issue on the table for the health ministers in Winnipeg.

We are seeing a shortage of not only physicians, but nurses across Canada. Again, we tend to rob from one another and this, unfortunately, has quite a negative impact. We want to make sure we have more health

professionals available in the province. When it comes to physicians, we have increased the number of medical spaces this year by 40. That was what the schools were able to accommodate. We did this because I decided not to wait for McKendry's report and the subsequent expert panel report which came out of the McKendry report. So when I asked the schools, "What could you accommodate on very short notice?" they indicated to us they could accommodate 40.

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But we hope that when Dr Peter George releases his expert panel report, he will indicate how many additional spaces are required in our medical schools. There has also been interest expressed by northern Ontario and Windsor about taking a look at expanding some medical school space into those areas. Again, we recognize we need more physicians, so we will move forward in accordance with the recommendations.

We're also looking at more opportunities to bring foreign-trained doctors into the system. I think we have quite a number and, again, we look forward to the recommendations of the expert panel. At the same time, of course, with nursing we're working with the RNAO, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. They've been given, I believe, \$50,000 in order to recruit and retain nurses in the province. If we need to expand the educational opportunities, we certainly are quite prepared to do so. We absolutely want to ensure that we have the adequate number of health professionals required to meet the demands of our population.

I just want to speak about our population, because really what's happening is to a very large degree being motivated by the fact, not only that our population is growing, but our population is aging. At the present time, we're spending \$22 billion on health. As you know, that's considerably more than we had anticipated we would be spending at this time, but the needs are there and we are responding to those needs.

However, 12.6% of our population is using \$11 billion. Those people, the 12.6%, are those over the age of 65. When we talk about the fact that we're going to see an increase in the number of people over the age of 65 in the next few years, particularly in the next 10 to 11 years when the baby boomers reach that age, we know the need for health services will continue to increase and we need to be prepared. That's why we're doing the short-term, long-term and medium-term planning to respond to those needs.

We are moving forward and, as I say, we've done a considerable amount of work. We do see our health costs rising continually, and I don't see any change in that. We have new medical technology and new medical equipment. It's very, very expensive. There are very high public expectations simply because people have so much access to the Internet and other forms of communication, so that when there is the technology or a piece of equipment made available in another part of the world, people demand that we provide that type of service here as well. All of this is very expensive. It's expensive to

buy the new equipment and the technology. It's also expensive to operate the new equipment.

At the same time, we have a lot of new drugs that are appearing on the market, drugs that really can make a difference in the quality of life for people in this province. But unfortunately again, the new drugs are very expensive. Our drug costs are tracking about 14% to 15% each year over the year before. That is having a tremendous impact on some of our health costs, and of course utilization is increasing. We need to be aware of that. Not only is this province prepared to provide additional money for health care, but we're going to require, over the next five years, an additional \$36 billion from Ottawa just to keep pace as well.

We move forward with a plan, recognizing what the needs are of our population, and with a vision. Our vision is one of a system that would be accessible and integrated and would provide quality service for all Ontarians, no matter where you live and at every stage of life.

The fact that we're expanding the dialysis, the cancer and cardiac, the fact that we have a Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program and that we're building 20,000 long-term-care beds all speak to that vision of what it is we are attempting to do.

But certainly one of the first steps we had to take was to secure our health budget here in the province. So we had to make sure the federal government returned to us the transfer payments that had been taken away and withheld for five years. I'm pleased the federal government has taken a good first step. I can assure you, however, that we will continue to urge the federal government to move to contribute at least 18% of the country's total health bill. We believe that's a very modest request. This is long overdue money, but any money we receive from the federal government will help us accelerate the pace of health system reform with such priorities as hospitals, home care, primary care, long-term-care beds, prevention initiatives and the drug benefit plan.

I want to focus for one minute on prevention initiatives. During the past three years, we have been trying to shift the focus at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care away from illness to prevention: injury and illness prevention and health promotion. Initiatives such as the Healthy Babies initiative, the stroke strategy, heart health and the tobacco strategy all speak to the need to better educate the public and encourage individuals to take greater responsibility and accountability for their own good health. We will continue to focus on prevention, because we believe this is going to improve health outcomes for all Ontarians and it's going to improve their own personal quality of life. People are living longer today, and they're going to be living about four years longer in the future. Obviously we want to make sure that as people get older their health is as good as it possibly can be.

Again, just a reminder: although we're spending \$22 billion this year on health, more than any other government in the history of this province, we believe that by the year 2003-04 that figure could easily reach \$24.2

billion. But I'd like to review with you now what the \$22 billion does provide.

It provides for 161 hospital corporations on 210 sites. It provides for health care providers such as 20,000 physicians, 80,000 nurses and 23 regulated health professionals. It provides for mental health services, which include nine psychiatric hospitals, five specialty psychiatric hospitals, community health programs and homes for special care. Of course you're well aware of our movement away from institutions and into community care. But we have assured the public that there will be no closure of hospitals until we have those community supports in place.

Drugs: We have more than 3,000 prescription drugs listed on the Ontario drug benefit formulary. We've actually added about 1,890 drugs since 1995.

In the way of community services, we have our 43 community care access centres. We have 1,100 assistive device vendors. We have 1,200 long-term-care agencies, 55 community health centres, 385 clinical laboratories, 1,011 independent health facilities and 160 agencies for drug and alcohol treatment services.

That gives you somewhat of a snapshot of what is available to meet the needs of our population. But I would just hearken back to the fact that demand for services will continue to increase, and we're going to continue to ensure we can respond to that demand.

#### 1750

I've talked about the increased need for cancer services and the increasing incidence of diabetes. I also want to speak to another health cost that is skyrocketing. Again, you don't have to be old, but we're seeing that 15% to 20% of Ontarians today have arthritis. In fact, that is the province's leading chronic disease and cause pain and disability. So that is a pressure we need to recognize.

We move forward to address the dynamics of demand, the issues of accessibility, accountability and affordability. As a result we're taking a look at the health system, thinking about how we can organize health services differently, how we can deliver them and how we can pay for them. We move forward to ensure that health providers are held accountable for the resources they use and the outcomes they achieve because, as most of you know, more than 90% of our resources go to our health providers. We simply provide funding for them to provide the services.

We want to ensure that people have an opportunity to take advantage of the new technology and treatment, but we want to make sure that as people do access this new treatment and technology, there is informed decision-making. So we need to promote the effective and efficient use of information technology across the system. We are also quite determined to ensure that we work in partnership with our doctors, nurses and other health professionals, our community services, long-term-care facilities and our many volunteers. I think it's important that we do that.



We're moving forward to modernize the system, and I've spoken to you about how we are attempting to do that. As we talk about modernizing the system, we might want to stop and recognize that, as a result of the advances that have been made in new drugs and technology, Ontarians today are spending much less time in the hospital than they did in the past. But that means we have to have the home care and community-based services available.

I'd like to share with you the fact that today 70% of all surgery happens on an outpatient basis. That is quite a shift from what happened in the past. So not only do we have to have the community services available, but we need to make sure we've got the long-term-care services available. As you know, we did make a \$1.2-billion commitment to build 20,000 long-term-care beds. Originally we said we'd build those in eight years. Since then we have accelerated the process, and I can assure you those beds will be up and operating by the year 2004. We have already made available 14,500 of those beds, and the last 5,500 will be made available through an RFP later this fall. So we're going to see a lot of openings of new long-term-care facilities next year, the year thereafter and until the year 2004.

We also have new design standards for people living in long-term-care facilities. You're no longer going to see wards with more than two people in them, people having to go down the hall to the washroom, people having to be taken by elevator to the ground floor or elsewhere. The new long-term-care facilities are designed to enhance quality of life for people as they get older. They are units of 32. People are either in a private room or a room for two, with their own washroom, their dining room and their living area. They all have access to the outdoors as well. We really hope that as a result of these new design standards, the quality of life for older people will be enhanced. We also hope it will encourage their families to continue to stay in touch with them in order that they have that support which is needed. There's tremendous progress being made in that area.

I'm just moving forward here, because I see that I've spoken to a lot of what is in my notes.

**The Chair:** You have approximately two minutes, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Maybe I'll mention as well another exciting initiative that has been set up, and that is the telephone health advisory service in northern Ontario. It allows people to call an experienced triage nurse to provide them with health information, advice and referral. We are expanding that service to the greater Toronto area early next year, and eventually to all communities across the province. It will improve access to primary care services as well. I think that is quite significant.

We won't have time to go into all the prevention initiatives, but I've certainly spoken to those.

I would conclude that we've made some exciting strides in mental health. We introduced Brian's Law. Actually, the government was recognized at the International Academy of Law and Mental Health, and we were presented with the Phillippe Pinel award for our work on the implementation of Brian's Law this past summer. We're moving forward to enact that legislation.

As a government, we want to remain steadfast in our commitment to the health of Ontarians. When we took office in 1995, we brought with us a significant list of aspirations, and at the present time I'm pleased to say we are turning many of those aspirations into achievements. But it wouldn't have been possible without the help of people in this province. We look forward to continuing to establish policies and programs that will extend the frontiers of health and the well-being of the people we serve.

**Ms Lankin:** Mr Chair, would it be possible, since the minister didn't have a chance to cover all the details in her notes, that she might provide a copy to the clerk, if she's agreeable?

**The Chair:** We understand from staff that that will be provided, and in that event we will be getting copies.

Thank you all. I look forward to our convening again next week.

*The committee adjourned at 1757.*







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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 17 October 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 17 octobre 2000

## Standing committee on estimates

Ministry of Health and Long-Term  
Care

## Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins  
de longue durée

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 17 October 2000

Mardi 17 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1602 in committee room 228.*MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
AND LONG-TERM CARE

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I call the meeting to order. I want to welcome the minister. I just remind members we're now at the point of rotation going 30 minutes to each of the parties, starting first with the official opposition.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I would prefer to waive my half-hour—

**Mr Kennedy:** I think that's something you need to address to the minister.

**Mrs McLeod:** Minister, with your permission, I would prefer to waive my half-hour of speaking and just go right to questions.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'd like to begin with the overall summary page on page 8 of the estimates. I want to draw your attention to a figure that we found rather striking, which was the 1999-2000 difference between the estimated spending and the interim actual spending. It appears to be an underspending of \$3 billion at this point in time, and I realize the public accounts are probably in their final form but they haven't been made public yet.

That's not, however, the issue I want you to address. The issue I want you to address is a reconciliation of the numbers that we see on page 8 in the overall summary and supposedly the exact same comparative numbers as we look at each of the votes, and if necessary, I can direct your attention to the page numbers. If we look at the vote for ministry administration as it appears on the summary page, it's \$114 million and if we look at it within the body of the estimates book, it's \$211 million; if we look at institutional health, it's \$7.4 billion and if we look in the body of the book, it's \$8.4 billion. I won't go on unless you require it. But virtually every number is different from the inside of the book to the overall summary page.

The consequence of that is when we add up the interim actuals that are in the body of the detailed health estimates book, we get a total of \$20.825 billion as the interim actual total spending, which we can't reconcile with the \$18.333 billion that's shown in your overall summary document. So I think, as a starting point, we need to know whether at the point of time at which the

estimates were published you were underspending \$3 billion and whether the balance of the book is in fact in error or if the overall summary page is in error. We can't reconcile the interim actual figures that appear in the summary page with the interim actual figures that appear in the body of the estimates.

**Ms Michelle DiEmanuele:** Michelle DiEmanuele, the chief admin officer for the ministry.

As you're aware, the public accounts will not be tabled in the Legislature until probably some time in October. At that point in time, the ministry's final expenditures for the fiscal year will therefore be tabled in the House and any reconciliations will be addressed at that point in time.

**Mrs McLeod:** It's not the reconciliation with public accounts that I'm looking for—I'd love to see it, but I wasn't expecting to have it—but it's the reconciliation with your own estimates that I'm looking for.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** With respect to the interim actuals, then, it's very difficult for me to address how the interim actuals fit with some of the other numbers that you're addressing until we've actually tabled those public accounts. If you would like to address some of the issues that you're raising with respect to 2000-01—

**Mrs McLeod:** If I may, I'm actually dealing only with the interim actual figures as presented in the estimates book. I'm not looking at anything else. I look at an interim actual figure for ministry administration of \$113.5 million on summary page 8. When I turn to page 16, I see an interim actual figure of \$211 million. If I look at institutional health, I see an interim actual figure on page 8 of \$7.4 billion and I look at the body of the book, page 53, and I see \$8.45 billion, which has made it virtually impossible for us to reconcile the figures just in this book, without even getting to public accounts.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** If you would like us to give you a detailed reconciliation of that, we'd be happy to table that tomorrow. There are obviously—

**Mrs McLeod:** But the question is, why are they different? They should be the same figures and I don't understand why they're different. I'm dealing with exactly the same column of figures on your summary page and I'm dealing with those exact same figures in the body of the book. One would expect that I could turn to any page with the vote and see the total figure for that vote—I'm not looking for individual programs—and turn back and



see exactly the same figure on page 8, which is the summary page, and they're all different.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I'm not disagreeing, but I'd like to have an opportunity to go back and check that and verify each and every one of those numbers and make sure we give you a correct answer in that regard.

**Mrs McLeod:** If I may, I'm a little bit befuddled. It's been very difficult to work with these estimates books because I have not seen a set of estimates in which the summary page numbers are, for every single number on the interim actual side, different from the numbers in the body of the book and where the totals are actually about \$2.5 billion different in the indication of spending.

On the summary page, it looks as though you're \$3.1 billion underspent from your estimates. In the body of your estimates, the same estimates—I'm not talking about public accounts now at all, but just the figures that have been tabled with this committee in estimates—it looks as though you spent \$20.8 billion, which is much closer to your estimated figure.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I just want to make sure that we're dealing with the issues separately. With respect to the underspending on the \$18 billion, I think you can appreciate that the public accounts will, in fact, deal with that.

The second issue, though, in terms of your question with respect to each of the interim actuals against the specific sections in the binder, I'm not disagreeing that you've pointed out that there is—take ministry administration, for instance—a discrepancy there. I would be happy to get back to you with respect to why that has occurred.

**Mrs McLeod:** Here's my difficulty: I start with my first question and it would be a question of where are you \$3 billion underspent. But because I found that a horrendous notion, I went back and added up the figures in the body of the book to find that you're not underspent at all; in fact, it's \$660 million. What I would like to be able to do with the balance of my time is explore the \$660 million. But if you can't tell me which set of numbers is right, and obviously, one of them has to be a significant \$2.5-billion error, I don't know where to begin. So it's a problem.

**The Chair:** It is a problem. I'm just in consultation with Legislative research. We are here to look at the estimates. The detailed estimates are the requirement of the ministry to provide by a certain date. We would hope for accuracy within those. The particular column you're addressing, which is interim actuals, is not the vote. The vote is on this year's estimates. So I think it really becomes a matter for the discretion of the ministry as to whether they wish to provide what our research says is a discrepancy of \$2.5 billion, if they wish to reconcile that so we can have a full estimates discussion.

It won't, however, interfere with our ability to vote on a number, which is in another column. I am advised that it's not a technical matter for this committee because we are voting on the estimates for this year, which—at least according to research—we don't have a discrepancy for. But I certainly agree it's material to our discussion and I

would hope that maybe there would be something forthcoming from the ministry that would aid us in that.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** Could I ask a question? I realize that it's Mrs McLeod's time, so I'll be very brief. I believe that the reconciliation of those numbers is actually quite germane to the vote we will be having on this year's estimates because our debate and discussion will be talking about what is estimated to be sent and the changes from the previous baselines. It's important to know what those are.

I'm just wondering if there is any way, with all-party agreement, we could adjourn and have those numbers worked on over the next day and have them provided to the committee, with sufficient time for the committee to review them and then reconvene, perhaps next week, with health estimates. It would make a lot more sense rather than having to ask each time which one of these is the right number with every one of our questions that we are going through.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Mr Chair, I wonder if I could just shed a little light on this. I've been on this estimates committee now for five years and this discussion is as old as the committee itself, I believe. We have this problem every year and it's not a significant problem when you consider that we're voting on the final number.

**Mrs McLeod:** Mr Chair, if I may, since it is my time—

**The Chair:** I appreciate your comment, Mr Wettlaufer. I'm going to actually allow a few minutes so we can resolve this matter. The information is certainly germane to the discussion. I don't think anyone is arguing that. I have not seen this particular dilemma before, where some of the information we have contradicts other of the information that we have.

What I'm saying, though, is that the estimates process itself isn't deleteriously affected if and as long as the numbers we vote on are the numbers that are correct. However, the spirit of estimates is compromised if we don't have information with which to form our discussion.

I guess I would look to hear, perhaps, from the ministry what might be possible in order for us to know how it would affect these proceedings by way of explaining that discrepancy so the various parties here would all have accurate information that wouldn't be subject to taking more of our time.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** May I just make a brief comment?

**The Chair:** A comment to see if the ministry has a response, or did you want to go ahead and make a point?

**Mr Curling:** I just want to afford the minister a response. I think a matter of procedure is happening here: as you suggested earlier on, an adjournment to work it out with research and with the minister's staff. This is eating up our time here. Then we could get back somehow, because it seems to me that while they debate whether or not they can do this, it's eating up our time here. Could we do that?

**The Chair:** I appreciate the suggestion, but what I would like to do is hear from the ministry and then we'll proceed at that juncture.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I think our preference would be to adjourn and get the appropriate numbers so that we're all dealing with the same set of numbers. I think it is important that we get that information. That would be our preference and we would continue—next week I guess is when we would resume, next Tuesday.

**The Chair:** Are we not meeting tomorrow?

**Mrs McLeod:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I guess that's what we have to find out: is it possible that this reconciliation could be achieved by our meeting time tomorrow?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** What I'd like to do is speak with the clerk for approximately half an hour and tell you whether or not that is doable. That would certainly be our goal.

**The Chair:** I will adjourn the committee proceedings for half an hour so we will know what our direction will be at that time.

*The committee recessed from 1614 to 1637.*

**The Chair:** I'd like to resume a few minutes early. I understand the ministry has made the inquiries it needs to make in order to ascertain when the information will be available, so I'll call the meeting back to order and address the question to you, Minister. Please let us know what the status is from the ministry standpoint.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We certainly will. In taking a look at the information and the questions that have been asked by Mrs McLeod, we do believe it's probably the summary page. But we'd like to thoroughly review all of the numbers and come back to you on Tuesday with an explanation, but provide for you on Monday any revised numbers that you would need to prepare for estimates on Tuesday and the other days that we'll be here. So our preference would be to do a thorough review and give you the information on Monday, and come back on Tuesday and explain.

**Mrs McLeod:** I guess I had almost expected that the ministry would have been able to confirm what the minister has suggested, that the summary page is inaccurate and that we can work with the body of the book. But given the lack of confirmation, it does make it more difficult for us to proceed. If you were to find that the body of the book is inaccurate, then we would need some detailed explanation for discrepancies in each of the detailed items, because obviously that's where our questions lie.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Exactly, and that's why I say I would like to make sure that all of the information is accurate. I know staff have indicated that they would review this.

**The Chair:** Other comments?

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate the minister's suggestion. I do genuinely acknowledge the time that's required to go back and to check that and I appreciate the attempt at thoroughness. There are two things I would like to suggest, however.

First, I would like to request that the information be made available to us by Friday instead of Monday. If there are differences, I would like to have some time over the weekend, not that I'm a detail hound or anything like that, but I would like to have some time over the weekend to look at it, and Monday makes it very difficult to do that.

Second, I would appreciate, if there are any updates on the interim actuals from the vote items, the individual vote pages here, that the information that's given to us draws our attention to that so that we don't have to go through and find the comparisons, and some information, either if they're amended or even if these stand as correct, as to when these interim actuals are dated from. I know there's a process of continuing to update, but I'm perplexed: a very tiny item like minister's salary, which shows \$39,000 compared to an estimate of \$65,000. It's not like you have to wait for the bill to come in on that one. So I'm wondering when these interim actuals are and how helpful they are.

The last thing I would say, and I think this is a reasonable suggestion: I do acknowledge that this committee has other ministries to deal with in terms of estimate items. Although I'm not a member of this committee, I'm subbed in to help. This is my critic area and my passion and I want to make sure I've got the numbers right. I don't want to feel like we are disadvantaging the work that members of this committee need to do with respect to the next ministry, which I think might be tourism. Is there a remedy in which these two days that are being lost might be sought from the House to be added to the committee's agenda?

**The Chair:** What I would ask of each of the caucuses is to attend a subcommittee meeting that I will convene in the next few days. At that time, I will learn the pleasure of the caucuses around the impact and we will look at a possible remedy or resolution to the estimates process. It is significant to lose two sessions in a row like this. We are, as everyone knows, very near the end of the estimates process, and I am very intent that we do it to the greatest extent that we can. I think everyone on the committee shares that goal.

So I'll ask the caucuses to consult their whips and find out what the impact would be. I believe the impact right now would be a loss of five hours for the Ministry of Tourism, which is a government choice, but it would affect the ability of the committee as a whole and each of the caucuses. I look forward to that subcommittee meeting and we'll try and arrive at a decision that doesn't involve the Speaker at that time. Technically we have some of the rules of order at least in question here, but rather than rely on them, Minister, can I ask, is Friday a goodwill possibility on your ministry's party.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We will certainly endeavour to have it completed. That's why we were offering first thing Monday. But I can certainly try to encourage the staff to complete it end of day Friday, and if there's a problem, we will alert you. But as I say, we want to make sure the numbers that we do present are accurate.

**The Chair:** Because I expect that the subcommittee may meet before then, is there any possibility, from the inquiries that you've been able to make, that you'd require more time than this to resolve this discrepancy?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, I don't anticipate—we will be ready on Tuesday.

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate the minister's undertaking. If it is ready some time on Friday, even if it is the end of day Friday, if it's possible then to make arrangements so that the clerk knows how to send, courier or whatever, the packages to the individual committee members, that would be helpful.

**The Chair:** What we're dealing with here, Minister, and I think you've shown a good consideration for that, is that the ability of estimates to function requires good quality of information—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** For sure, yes.

**The Chair:** —and some reasonable time with that information. I would say that reasonable time would

hopefully be more than one day for all parties, all members of the committee, to be able to then recalibrate their questions and give us the kind of effort that we need on the people's behalf.

If there are no further submissions, the implication of this will be discussed at subcommittee. My intention now is to try and find a solution rather than to resolve it on a point of order. The point of order would be that the minister isn't in order by not providing the information. I'm not making that ruling at this time. I will instead rely on the subcommittee and hope we can get a goodwill decision. Do we see reasonable prospects for that, Mr Wettlaufer?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm sure there are.

**The Chair:** All right. Therefore, I declare this committee adjourned until next Tuesday at 3:30.

*The committee adjourned at 1643.*





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**Official Report  
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**Tuesday 24 October 2000**

**Journal  
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**Mardi 24 octobre 2000**

**Standing committee on  
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Ministry of Health and Long-Term  
Care

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES

Tuesday 24 October 2000

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Mardi 24 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1531 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
AND LONG-TERM CARE

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I call the committee to order to recommence hearings on the estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We return to the position where we were, with approximately four minutes of the opposition time used to establish the difficulties that we're aware arose, and I'm going to now return to Ms McLeod. Information materials have been provided—we understand the ministry is comfortable—and we'll proceed with the estimates as they stand.

Just before we do that, and before we officially get underway, for the benefit of the ministry it looks as though we will simply be meeting today, Wednesday and the following Tuesday, and we hope to discharge your time in that period. For the rest of the members of the committee, your caucus representatives have been meeting in subcommittee trying to find alternate times, but it has proven difficult to get full caucus representation and minister representation.

Just to reiterate: for purposes of the Ministry of Health, we're simply meeting today, tomorrow and next Tuesday. As I understand it, that should discharge the time we have for the Ministry of Health. We will notify the other ministries, in case any are present, as soon as we have the subcommittee business worked out.

We'll proceed with Ms McLeod, 26 minutes.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I appreciate having had the accurate summary sheets provided to us in time to look at them before going into detailed estimates today. I'm not going to spend much time on the summary, and most of my questions are going to be around the operating budget. Having said that, I'll start with a question about the overall capital budget, and I think we can deal with this largely from the capital summary sheet, Minister.

For the year before this, 1999-2000, the capital budget was \$1.3 billion, the estimate was about \$504 million and the actual amount spent was \$84 million. You budgeted \$1.3 billion, you planned to spend only \$500 million of that and you actually spent less than \$100 million, according to the interim actuals, and this year again you show both in budget and in estimates a plan to spend \$1.3 billion. All I'm seeing is a repetition of a figure in

budgets and in estimates that has nothing to do with the actual expenditures that are going on on the capital front.

I wonder if you could explain why you spent less than \$100 million of the \$1.3 billion last year, and why you only plan to spend \$500 million?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm going to ask Michelle DiEmanuele, the ADM and chief administrative officer, to address the issue and give you the response.

**Ms Michelle DiEmanuele:** If I can refer to page 8 of the summary tables: by way of explanation, as you indicate, the interim actuals show \$83 million of expenditure this year, which is down from \$171 million previously. We fully expect, when the public accounts are tabled, that that number will be approximately \$320 million, give or take. So a significant increase in capital will be apparent in the public accounts, which are to be tabled in approximately three or four weeks.

With respect to the estimates for 2000-01, you'll see there is cash flow of the \$1.2 billion, which was announced by the minister recently. That is a significant increase in the capital budget, and that has been booked and is flowing to the hospital sector. We will still see some underspending in the capital budget this year. That's primarily reflective of planning exercises on the part of the hospitals and some interim approvals that are yet to be had. But we fully expect those to be reprofiled into next year.

**Mrs McLeod:** Can you explain to me, though, the estimates show the capital budget being increased by \$776 million this year, but in fact that's not an increase over what was budgeted for the previous year. The budget for 1999-2000 was the same \$1.3 billion that is in the budget for 2000-01.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I believe you're mixing the PSAAB numbers with the actual cash out the door, which is what the estimates would refer to.

**Mrs McLeod:** It's actually the tabled budget figures that I'm referring to in each instance. In both cases, the capital budget figure is \$1.3 billion.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** The budget numbers are in PSAAB. This would be in cash. But they actually are aligned.

**Mrs McLeod:** The question is, why do you keep announcing \$1.3 billion when you don't spend it? It looks to me as though this is one of the areas in which announcements are being made and the money never actually gets spent.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** The \$1.2 billion—actually it would closer to \$1 billion right now—is actually in the hands of the hospitals. That money is out the door and has been released to the hospital sector for the sake of the capital program, which, as you know, is an aggressive program the minister has announced.

**Mrs McLeod:** Right. So that is in total? What is out the door is what you estimated to spend, which is \$500 million last year?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** No. Let's go back through the numbers one more time. In terms of the interim actuals, which you started with, this year those will be slightly over \$300 million on a cash basis.

**Mrs McLeod:** So \$200 million underspent on the \$500 million estimate?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I could get you the exact figure.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'd appreciate that.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I don't have it with me, but I will find it and give it to you. That's on an in-year basis?

**Mrs McLeod:** Yes.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** In terms of the interim actuals?

**Mrs McLeod:** So the public accounts will show \$300 million?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Yes, \$320 million or \$325 million, give or take.

**Mrs McLeod:** Right. I would appreciate a reconciliation, because the estimates clearly show \$504 million planned to be spent—

**Ms DiEmanuele:** That's right.

**Mrs McLeod:** —and you're telling me that \$300 million will be shown in public accounts.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** We will be underspent in the capital budget for the reasons I articulated.

**Mrs McLeod:** Right. And could I see a reconciliation of the \$300 million versus the \$1.3 billion that was budgeted for 1999-2000? Obviously what I'm looking for is, how often will we see the \$1.3 billion being budgeted and not actually see the dollars flow? How much of the \$1.3 billion in this year's capital budget is actually an increase in funding over dollars that simply didn't flow?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** We'll give you a reconciliation, both on a cash and a PSAAB basis, so you understand the difference in terms of when the money has been announced versus out the door. But I can assure you it is only money that's going out once.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm sure it's only going out once. I'm just looking for what hasn't gone out yet that appears in budgets. I will return to that when we have that information and also when we get into the area of hospital restructuring.

I'd like to turn to hospitals next—I'm looking at vote 1402-1.

Before I deal specifically with hospitals, though, one last question on the summary sheets. In this case, I want to deal only with 2000-01 where there was no change. The estimated operating budget alone is \$22.590—

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Could I just ask which page you're referring to in the summary sheets?

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm on your summary page.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Page 8 or page 9?

**Mrs McLeod:** It's page—

**Ms DiEmanuele:** One with capital or with—

**Mrs McLeod:** Operating.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** OK.

**Mrs McLeod:** It's \$22.590. The budgeted operating figure for the Ministry of Health was \$22 billion. The estimates, therefore, show some \$590 million—almost \$600 million—over budget in operating. As we get into the hospital budget figures, I think we'll find some \$270 million in hospital underspending from 1999-2000 that appears to have been rolled into this budget, along with \$300 million in restructuring costs that were rolled into this budget from 1999-2000. That would account for the \$600 million in apparent spending over budget that we're seeing on the operating side in the health ledger. Are you able to confirm those figures for me at this point?

**1540**

**Ms DiEmanuele:** That's \$600 million over budget?

**Mrs McLeod:** That's right. The operating budget as presented in the spring was \$22 billion, and we're looking at \$22.59 billion on your operating expenditures. I believe that can be accounted for with the 1999-2000 dollars that have been flowed into the new budget.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I think, actually, what we're dealing with again is the difference between reporting in the budget numbers, which are on PSAAB basis, and reporting, as we are in estimates, on a cash basis. We can give you a more detailed reconciliation, but that's actually the difference.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm fully aware of that. That's why I don't think that the estimates, the additional \$600 million, is spending over and above the budget. I'm fully appreciative of that. What I'm trying to get at, and it relates to my questions on hospitals, is that I believe that about \$270 million of that—about—is spending that was announced to be spent in 1999-2000 and wasn't flowed and is therefore being rolled over into this budget year; and similarly, \$300 million on restructuring that was booked, announced in the last budget year but, because it wasn't spent, is now being shown as a cash flow in this year's estimates.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** On a budget this size, there would certainly be areas in which reprofiling would occur. We can get into some of that detail as we go through the hospital lines—

**Mrs McLeod:** If I could get some confirmation, then, that the \$590 million was essentially made up of those two components, which was funding announced in 1999-2000 and not flowed and therefore booked in this year, I would appreciate that as well.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Twofold, Mrs McLeod: first off, I'd have to confirm whether or not your figure is correct on the \$500 million-plus; secondly, we will have to give you, again, numbers in both PSAAB and in cash to make sure we're comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges, and then we can go from there.

**Mrs McLeod:** That's right. Let me take you directly into hospital funding, where the estimate of your



spending on hospitals is \$8 billion this year, shown as an increase of \$817 million from the estimates for 1999-2000 of \$7.2 billion. The actual—and I'm dealing with 1999-2000 figures now—budgeted figure plus the announcements that were made during the course of the—

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** Which page are you looking at? I'm sorry.

**Mrs McLeod:** Vote 1402, page 56.

Although the figures that I am about to read into the record are announced figures and budget figures, which we don't actually have in the estimates book. I guess I'm trying to reconcile budget figures, announced figures, estimates figures and what is actually getting out the door.

I appreciate that you can't confirm these right off the top, so I'm just going to read them into the record. The budgeted figure was \$7.186 billion for hospitals in the 1999-2000 budget. There were announcements of \$196 million in December 1999 and \$235 million in March 1999, so the budget plus announcements would have totalled \$7.6 billion, which is certainly our understanding of what had been booked for hospital spending in the 1999-2000 year.

Your interim actuals are showing \$7.33 billion. It's a difference of about \$284 million. The difference between the budget plan and the \$7.6 billion in your estimates is, again, about \$274 million to \$280 million. Of all those announcements that were made to deal with the emergency funding, the \$196 million, to deal with the hospital deficits, how much of that money is now out the door? It appears to me that as of the tabling of the interim actuals, which showed that \$7.33 billion had been spent—and I appreciate that was in the spring—there was almost \$300 million that had been announced but hadn't actually flowed to hospitals. So my question is, how much of the \$7.6 billion that was announced for hospitals last year is now out the door and in the hospitals for the purposes of providing care?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Maybe I can take it in two steps, and I would probably call upon John King, our assistant deputy minister in the area.

Let me take the estimates numbers first. There is a net increase to the hospital line of approximately \$490 million, and that is primarily going to priority programs and, as you indicated, a series of announcements that the minister has made.

With respect to the interim actuals, in terms of the \$196 million that you reference, that has gone out the door. My understanding is that the monies announced by the minister for hospitals has all been released at this point.

John, I'm just going to confirm that. All those numbers have been released. Do you want to join me here as well?

With respect to an actual figure, we can certainly provide that to you. There is net underspending in the hospital line, as you saw in the summary tables. That's primarily due to restructuring being delayed in some

respects, and that will be reprofiled into the next year. I'll let Mr King deal with it more specifically now.

**Mrs McLeod:** I guess my specific question is this: we know that as of the tabling of the interim actuals in June of this year, when the estimates were tabled with this, that almost \$300 million in announced funding for hospitals had not flowed. Has it all flowed and when did it flow?

**Mr John King:** Actually, I have the dates, so I can give you the actual flow of the dollars. But all of the dollars that you referred to have flowed at this point in time on the estimates sheets—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I wonder if you could just identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard, please.

**Mr King:** I'm sorry. I thought Michelle had introduced me first. I'm John King. I'm the assistant deputy minister for health care programs.

Just back to your point about \$7.6 billion and where we're at with that. All of those dollars have flowed. On the estimates sheet, you'll see under the \$250 million there are some parts of that that are some growth dollars that have yet to be announced, but that's a minimal part of that. Most of those dollars have all flowed at this time.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Mrs McLeod, if I can just be clear on the interim actual figure, which I think you're trying to get at, there is a net underspending in that line in the interim actuals, as you see, that is not associated with the dollars the minister has announced for such things as emergency room funding, base budgets of hospitals etc. That is associated primarily with the restructuring figures—I believe on page 56 as well—that were announced to ease the transition of hospital restructuring on the part of the sector. Some of that has progressed somewhat more slowly than anticipated, and that's where the underspending has occurred; it is not in the areas that the minister has announced with respect to the new programs etc.

**Mrs McLeod:** I may come back to that when we get to the restructuring, because there is another \$300 million in underspending specifically on operating for restructuring.

What I'm looking at right here is the \$284 million that was designated for hospitals, not under the restructuring line, but directly to hospital operating. I think what you're telling me is that, apart from restructuring, there were some other areas in which money was not flowed as of spring that was booked in 1999-2000. If there are other areas, I would appreciate getting some detail on that.

**Mr King:** Could I also just make a point here? If you look at it—and I've now followed where you're trying to relate your numbers—the \$7.3 billion you're referring to, and the \$235 million was a one-time payment that went out to hospitals at year-end. That brings us up to the \$7.6 billion. I think that's the amount of money that you were—

**Mrs McLeod:** With respect, I don't want to get even more tangled than these numbers already are. The bottom line is that the hospital spending and the operating

spending in your estimates is significantly over what the Minister of Finance has budgeted for health. I think that reflects a rollover of unspent dollars into this year's health estimates. I'm trying to get a handle on what was not actually flowed before year-end that would account for this year's estimates being well over the money that the Minister of Finance was giving you, because I'm sure if you had increased the total budget figure, we'd have heard about that separately.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Again, I think the crux of that relates to PSAAB versus cash. We'll do a reconciliation for you on that issue and, from there, identify for you what—

**Mrs McLeod:** What that means in my language is that there was money announced that was not flowed and therefore becomes part of this year's estimates, before the end of March. That has to be factual unless the Minister of Finance has increased your budget.

Let me bring it back, though, to hospital deficits. If there is something I say on the record that you would like to bring in information to correct at a future session, I'd be happy to receive that, I assure you.

1550

**Mr King:** I think we'll bring back some information on that, and I think we should do a breakdown because, as I said before, this money has flowed.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that it may have flowed since year-end, but I'm suggesting it didn't flow before year-end.

**Mr King:** I think it's just a timing issue that we're referring to.

**Mrs McLeod:** Which is fairly significant, because the timing issue relates directly to hospital deficits, which is what I wanted to ask you about. The OHA has just done a report showing their deficits for 2000-01 of \$364 million; 77% of hospitals are in a deficit position. They're showing for the first time that their working capital is in deficit by some \$400 million. I understand the hospitals have been told to bring in operating plans that are balanced. I also understand they've been told they are not to cut.

The question I want to pose to you, Minister, is, are you about to bail out the hospitals in terms of their deficits, and if so when will the bailout come, or are you looking to hospitals to cut some \$364 million out of this year's operating fund?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** In response to your question, Mrs McLeod, as you know, there have been hospital deficits for many years. Of course, what happens is that the Ministry of Health staff are carefully reviewing all of the plans that are submitted and have been meeting with hospitals as well and will continue to meet with hospitals in order to ensure that the issue of the deficits can be addressed.

**Mrs McLeod:** Can I ask it specifically around numbers, though, since this is our opportunity to deal with the real numbers?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes.

**Mrs McLeod:** The difference between the money that was budgeted and announced for hospitals in 1999-

2000—and I'm being assured by the assistant deputy minister that that money has all flowed. The difference between that figure and this budgeted figure for hospitals for this year is only \$100 million. I'm looking at \$364 million worth of deficits and \$400 million worth of deficit on the working capital side. I don't know how \$100 million of booked funding in real increase for hospitals this year is going to solve either one of those problems. Where is the money going to come from if the hospital deficits are to be relieved, or are you about to start cutting hospital budgets?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We've made it quite clear to hospitals that they're not to cut any services. As I say, we are reviewing the plans that have been presented to us, and we will be working with the hospitals in order to address the issue of the deficits.

**Mrs McLeod:** Do you have money salted away somewhere? Are you expecting some increase from the Minister of Finance to be able to deal with this? I may be adding these up incorrectly, but it looks to me as though there could be a net deficit situation, as we speak, of close to \$800 million in our hospital system.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask Mr King, who actually has the responsibility for our hospitals, to respond to you further, Mrs McLeod. Perhaps some of the information he has gathered as they reviewed the hospital plans will shed some further light on the situation.

**Mr King:** It's important that you understand we have been working very closely with the hospitals. The operating plans were submitted actually later this year. We did not receive them until the end of July. We basically go through each of the hospitals line by line. I personally went and reviewed each of the hospitals in question because of the pressures that we understood were appearing for the hospital deficits. That process took at least till the end of August, and we were just, during the month of September, putting some information together and will be making recommendations through to the minister to deal with those deficits for this year.

We are well aware of pressures that have occurred this year. We will continue to work to ensure that patient care is delivered and protected in this province. I think all of the hospitals have continued to deliver good quality care during this time.

**Mrs McLeod:** Do you have more than \$100 million in new funding, Mr King, to relieve hospital deficits this year?

**Mr King:** I personally don't have any money. But the point is that we would like to recommend forward to the minister the needs that are required for this. I think we now have a better handle on it, and you've also pointed out some of the numbers that we are looking at right now to bring recommendations forward to the minister.

**Mrs McLeod:** Do you have any estimate of how much would be added to the hospitals' deficits if they were to implement the emergency room measures that were announced just two weeks ago, Minister? We know that every hospital had to contribute out of its operating



fund in order to staff up its emergency rooms. If your announcement were fully implemented, do you have any idea what that would add to hospital deficits?

**Mr King:** I'd certainly have a number that would add to dealing with the emergency strategy that was announced, yes.

**Mrs McLeod:** From the hospitals' operating budgets?

**Mr King:** Yes, I know the number that we would project for the hospitals to deal with the emergency strategy.

**Mrs McLeod:** Can you give us that in total?

**Mr King:** The total number we're looking at is approximately \$56 million.

**Mrs McLeod:** From the hospitals?

**Mr King:** From the hospitals.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We have you about three more minutes.

**Mrs McLeod:** In that case, I will spend the balance of the time—you can appreciate there are a lot of areas in health. I know my colleague and co-critic is anxious to get to some of her areas as well, but we might as well finish off on hospitals in this session, and then we can decide what to focus on next.

Page 60 on the hospital restructuring, which you've already begun to address, shows some \$323 million underspent on a budget of \$512 million. I'm dealing with the total budget there. My question is pretty simple. Why is the hospital restructuring budget underspent? I think you've indicated that the restructuring is not going as quickly—and you may not get a chance to answer all these questions in three minutes, so let me put them on the record.

I see that this year you're planning to spend only \$142 million where you estimated last year \$361 million on the restructuring, and that doesn't include the renovations. My question is, is the restructuring being slowed down? Are there fewer bed closures planned?

Then what I will want to put on the record are questions about hospital bed numbers, because according to the Ontario Hospital Association report, every region in the province has fewer beds now—acute care beds only I'm speaking of—than the HSRC's target, which means there are beds being closed presumably not in relationship to the commission's targets.

My questions are, given this restructuring budget, given the fact that you underspent by \$300 million last year, and you're planning to spend only \$142 million, how many more beds are going to close, how many more facilities are going to close and where are you in relationship to the commission's targets?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I can begin and then I'll ask staff to continue. The hospital restructuring fund was set in place in 1997-98, and that was to provide assistance for operating costs related to implementing the restructuring directions. This reduction that you're seeing here reflects a reprofiling of the cash requirements to be paid out in 2000-01 versus what was planned. I would ask Mr King to further address the issue of the numbers.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr King, we have a minute to go.

**Mr King:** A minute?

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm particularly concerned obviously with how this translates into facility bed closures and targets.

**Mr King:** Right. We continue to follow the directions of the commission with respect to the restructuring process. The commission had announced a number of closures of buildings, but it's consolidation of programs. It doesn't necessarily mean closures of beds.

It's important to note that when you're looking at closing a building, there was a rebuild on another site which may, in many cases, include the same number of beds and the same services. It's really an enhancement to services.

**Mrs McLeod:** But overall, you have bed target figures because they're built into your consolidation plans.

**Mr King:** The practice in hospitals, as you know, has moved more to outpatient care. The need for all those beds and the additional beds that have been in the system before certainly has changed, but as population grows and there are changes in population demographics, we have to look at that growth in the system and look at what is required, both in-patient and outpatient, for the system.

The restructuring process is not moving as quickly as we would have liked, but as Michelle has indicated, we have given the hospitals the means to move as quickly as possible on the restructuring process.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr King.

**Mrs McLeod:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: May I leave on the record, then, and look for an answer at the next session, the bed numbers? I hear you saying you may have moved off the commission's targeted bed numbers. I want to know how many beds you're targeting and what this budget provides for.

**The Vice-Chair:** Ms Lankin, you have 30 minutes.

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate the revised information and the minister's explanation for what happened. I think we were well prepared, based on the body of the book, to proceed.

**1600**

I would like to follow up, as we are talking about hospital restructuring, so maybe Mr King won't go too far. My question continues really in the area that Ms McLeod was exploring. I'm looking right now at page 53. You can look at 56, but I'm looking at 53, which is the summary vote item on institutional health program, hospital restructuring, and I realize that includes restructuring and renovation costs combined together there.

You've answered part of this. Last year you estimated that you would spend \$512 million for 1999-2000. This year you expect to pay \$209 million less than that. I recognize, if we look at the interim actuals, that a lot less went on than you had expected, that clearly things were moving slower. That's your explanation. But your budget for this year is \$209 million less than you had anticipated spending last year.

My concern about this is that when I put that together with the comments that have been made over the last



couple of years—we know that the Health Services Restructuring Commission estimated it would take about \$2.1 billion to complete restructuring. I know we're talking capital and operating, right? The Ontario Hospital Association disagreed, saying that it would cost about \$3.2 billion. The 1999 auditor's report said it would likely cost \$3.9 billion, which almost doubled the restructuring commission's estimate. When we're looking at this as it plans out over the years and we see that kind of a drop, and yet hospitals are telling us that they are still experiencing deficits related to restructuring costs, I am at a loss to understand why there is such a dramatic reduction in the planned expenditures related to restructuring for this coming year. Could you give us some thoughts about that?

**Mr King:** Again, the hospitals may be referring to a number of different areas. First of all, the restructuring process, as we have all understood, has become a slower process than we would all like. We'd like it to happen overnight, but it just doesn't happen. The cost of these projects, of course, the cost of supplies etc as you move through this, also increases, so we're working through that with the hospitals. But the spending of the capital side is an area that Paul Clarry, who's the director for capital, should really speak to, as far as the flow of the funds.

When you're talking about operating and transitional costs, that's another whole area.

**Ms Lankin:** I realize that.

**Mr King:** Again, we did estimate or plan for dollars to be available to flow to the hospitals, whether it be for layoffs or changes as we went through the restructuring process. Again, that has not happened as quickly, and basically we are not seeing a downsizing that's occurring in the staff or the operating costs of these hospitals. That just didn't occur as we had planned. You'll see in some of the estimate numbers that we haven't spent as much in the transitional operating costs also.

But when we go through the process of restructuring, if you've personally been involved in it, like many of us have been, it is a very slow process. You have a great many plans to make it happen very quickly. It just doesn't always happen the way you would like to plan it. However, in the end, you do a reconciliation of your dollars, and I think that's really where you're getting at: did it work out the way we had projected? We had put more dollars in than we have spent for the restructuring and the same has occurred for the transitional costs.

**Ms Lankin:** And as a result of that, you have dramatically downsized your expectations of what will happen in this coming year. That's why we can see that kind of a drop of \$209 million from last year's budget to what you actually expect the activity will cost this year? This is on the operating side.

**Mr King:** Oh, on the operating side. I think that we're referring really to the capital side here, and that's where I prefer Paul actually speak to that.

**Ms Lankin:** No, I'm not actually.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** You're referring to the \$303 million, right?

**Ms Lankin:** Yes.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** And in terms of estimates, the estimates from the \$188 million. Certainly it's fair to say that the estimates interim actual—there was obviously a decrease in what our expectation was with respect to achieving.

**Ms Lankin:** Right. What I'm saying is that even from estimates last year to estimates this year there is a decrease of \$200 million.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I would suggest we've aggressively stepped up our activities, going from the \$188 million to try and move us to the \$303 million over the next year through a series of initiatives, both in working with the hospitals with our regional offices and our regional directors, who are trying to work with hospitals in streamlining planning processes and transition processes to have us able to achieve at a higher level than last year's interim actual.

**Ms Lankin:** To sum it up, it's a more realistic expectation than your estimates last year, but it's more aggressive than what you actually did last year.

What I want to know, though, is how that relates to the situation facing hospitals with respect to their deficits. We know, for example, that at hospitals like Sudbury Regional, their operating plan submission to the ministry estimated \$190 million in expenses. There was a bottom-line deficit there of \$9.3 million. Since they submitted their operating plan to you, they've revised that and the deficit figure they're now projecting is over \$15 million. A couple of other hospitals have given us similar numbers. We don't have the province-wide view. The OHA suggests that the province-wide deficit projection is between \$350 million and \$400 million.

Would you confirm for us what the current deficit projections for the hospitals in Ontario are, and how much of that you realistically expect, through the negotiation of working plans around the operating plans—and I understand that process; I've watched it happen. It's sort of scary when the minister sees the number at first and then sees it worked down. But I think you have to admit that over the years there is less and less room for hospitals to address some of those things. The minister's commitment that services won't be cut is really important. I would like confirmation of your expectation of the current projected deficits, where you think you're going to be with continued work on the operational plans and what you think you're going to have to pay out to ensure that no services are cut.

**Mr King:** The operating plans were very detailed on some of the information the hospitals were experiencing, as well as what the hospitals would like to do. There was a great deal of new programming and new expansion in there. Of course we need to work through each of these items line by line with the hospitals to ensure they're accurate. The \$350-million number you are coming up with is in an area of what the hospitals have presented in

their operating plans. That does not necessarily mean those are acceptable numbers from—

**Ms Lankin:** I realize that.

**Mr King:** As you mentioned too, as you work through the process, you need to narrow that down to—

**Ms Lankin:** Sorry, Mr King, can I just refine my question then? You said that number is what was in their operating plan. In the example of Sudbury that I gave you, where their operating plan projected a deficit of \$9.3 million, they are currently projecting a deficit of \$15 million since they submitted that plan. Can you tell me if there is a number that's even larger than the \$350 million that's looming out there in terms of hospitals' revised expectations of what is going to be required to meet the community health needs in their communities?

**Mr King:** I think it's fair to say that at the time of the submission, that was their projection of their estimate for year-end. It is very unusual for a hospital now to come in with an estimate that would be twice that number. You have a little more information than I do on the Sudbury situation, so I can't comment—

**Ms Lankin:** OK. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but we have such a short time. I understand the explanation and the process very well, and I'm respectful of that. Could I ask you to look, from your staff who are involved in reviewing the operational plans and who I know are in touch with hospitals daily and weekly, and tell us what revisions to hospital deficit projections have happened since the operating plans were submitted? I've heard from not just Sudbury but from several others that those numbers are being revised upwards. You've given confirmation of the \$350 million; I'd like to know the current status. Could I ask the ministry to provide that information at a later date?

1610

Let me take this a step further in terms of what it means with the announcement that—before I do that, Minister, you made a statement, a commitment about, “As we work through this, no services will be cut.” I appreciate I've raised the concern with you, and I know you are looking into it. I have since raised a concern with you about a particular hospital that is cutting specialized geriatric services, a dementia clinic in particular. I have spoken with a number of gerontologists across the province who have a concern that in spite of the fact that the ministry has a process for looking at specialized geriatric services, we're losing them in the hospitals as we speak.

When you say services won't be lost—services like the dementia clinic, which has been in place at Scarborough General Hospital since 1994; it's the only specialized dementia clinic in Scarborough, serving that huge population, with a significant number of seniors. I know this—and I'll declare my own bias—because my mother is a dementia patient of that clinic. But the calling I've done suggests, from other gerontologists, that this is an ongoing problem. The hospital, in dealing with its budget pressures, is withdrawing the resource support to the ongoing operation of that dementia clinic, and this is not the only place it's happening. When you say we

won't lose services, how do you reconcile that with an example like this? Are there core services that you have an expectation will be kept and other things the hospitals may have been doing might go by the wayside, or will what's in place and what people have been used to and are receiving be maintained and you'll debate with them about increased services for the future?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** First of all, it's important to recognize that hospitals are autonomous. Obviously hospitals make decisions about programming and service delivery consistent with the needs of the particular community they serve. What we have indicated is obviously there should be no reductions in services. However, we also need to keep in mind that in some instances, services that have been delivered within hospitals are now sometimes being delivered, for example, in the community by community agencies. We need to keep in mind that obviously some of the patients who formerly were in our hospitals are now in long-term-care acute facilities. Some of the specialized services that had been provided in the hospitals are now provided outside the hospitals.

I think we all recognize we have a growing aging population, and it's going to become increasingly important that services for older people continue not only to be available but that they be expanded. One of the areas where our government has responded quite effectively in the area of dementia and Alzheimer's is our Alzheimer strategy, where we are making funding available to community agencies in the province in order to support not only Alzheimer patients but their families and their caregivers. That's certainly a vehicle where we are expanding our support for people with Alzheimer's and related dementia.

**Ms Lankin:** If I may, Minister, appreciating the initiative you are speaking to, perhaps I can put on the record the request I made of you to look into this example. Here's my concern. The dementia clinic, in this case, is not a clinic that relates solely to patients in this hospital. It's an outpatient clinic, it is medical diagnosis, it is medical treatment, it is ongoing follow-up of dementias of all sorts. It is not the same as the very important strategy to deal with community care support for individuals and families, day programs, respite, those sorts of things. We're talking about the medical gerontology-neurology treatment of dementias; the testing, application and monitoring of new drugs like Exelon and Aricept and others that are out there; the exploration and understanding of related dementias and things like the few that have both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, all of that.

What I am suggesting to you is that where this kind of service was available and met community population health needs in this particular part of the province—and I'm referring to Scarborough right now—is this being withdrawn by a decision of the hospital around their budgeting process with the available funds that they have? It is a decision which actually undermines the direction of the government with respect to support for individuals and families of patients with Alzheimer's and related dementia.



Is there a way, respecting the autonomy of the hospitals that you're talking about, that you can or will respond to looking at these particular needs of specialized geriatric services? You and I know, of course, that you have life-support programs in other areas, you have particularly dedicated programs for certain kinds of surgical procedures. Again, there is not currently, that I'm aware of, specialized dedicated and therefore protected funding for specialized geriatric services. What the gerontologists are telling me is that we are seeing a massive erosion of those supports because they don't necessarily have the support of individual autonomous hospitals to continue those supports. Without that, much of your community strategy, while still important, will be very difficult for families to access and to cope with, to even get the right diagnosis and the right medication to try to manage that. Could I get an undertaking for you to look into this, review this and perhaps provide comments back to the committee with respect to that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Certainly. I will endeavour to ensure that ministry staff do return with the appropriate information in response to the concerns that you have indicated here. If I get back to the Alzheimer's strategy that we talked about, part of what we're doing, as you know, is that we are hiring 40 experts and an additional 10 experts next year to advise staff in long-term-care centres and community service agencies on how to work with these individuals. Also, we have a committee that is looking at what further resources are going to be required to support patients with Alzheimer's and related dementia.

**Ms Lankin:** I applauded and mentioned earlier the initiative of looking at specialized geriatric services. What I'm telling you is that they are disappearing while you're looking at them.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Certainly we will endeavour to do that.

**Ms Lankin:** Great. I appreciate that. Looking at the issue of the hospital budget and the decisions that hospitals are making, given the pressure of deficits that they have projected they are facing, one of the concerns we hear from front-line staff, nurses in particular, is that monies you have announced and that you have put into hospitals to deal with things like emergency room pressures are, in fact, going to deal with deficit pressures that exist in the hospital and are not addressing, for example, expanding the number of nurses, which frees up a lot of things, as you know, down the chain.

What measures or accountability mechanisms have you put in place with respect to the monies you have announced, either the \$13 million for the 10-point plan and/or the most recent announcement? Perhaps you could tell me the actual figure of ministry money in that. Is it about \$8 million of new ministry money?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** For their latest AFP, the alternative funding plan?

**Ms Lankin:** Yes. What was that?

**Mr King:** Six.

**Ms Lankin:** It was \$6 million, was it? It was \$6 million of ministry money, \$66 million of hospital money if they choose to pay their \$90,000 and an amount of money that is currently paid through the fee-for-service pool, and that's what made up the announcement. What is the accountability mechanism attached to that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'd like to address the issue of nursing because, as you know, for the first time, when we made available to the hospitals the allocations in order that they could hire additional nurses, they received this funding separately. The money was flowed and they were to provide us with a plan indicating that nurses were moving from casual to permanent, part-time and full-time, the number of nurses that were being hired and where those nurses were going to be employed.

The chief nursing officer in the province of Ontario is reviewing the plan that—

**Ms Lankin:** Could I interrupt you for just a second because I actually would like to do a whole section with you on nursing. If we could for a moment—I know it's very related, so I'm not denying that point, but I'm wondering if you could answer what accountability mechanisms have actually been attached to those dollars to ease the ER. Because what front-line staff and nurses feel is happening is that other operating budget pressures are absorbing that money and it's not having the impact you wanted it to have in terms of emergency rooms.

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**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What we're hearing—and I'll let Mr King follow up on that—from the staff in the hospital is that as a result of the additional money that has flowed and the improved coordination and collaboration among community services, those involved in the ambulance sector, long-term-care facilities and within the hospital, there have certainly been improvements made when it comes to pressures in the emergency room.

However, we all know that utilization of emergency rooms continues to increase as a result of the growing and aging population, and obviously there is more that needs to be done. I'll turn it over to Mr King in order that he can specifically address the issue of the accountability and what mechanisms are in place to address that.

**Mr King:** I should point out again, and this has been at the direction of the minister, that any of the funds that do flow now have an accountability mechanism. All of the recent announcements, and you referred to a few of them—the 10-point plan, for example, the nursing announcements—all have sign-backs that the hospitals agree that the dollars will be directed to that purpose. In other words, they are dedicated funding that the hospitals do put aside.

We are also looking at doing audits. We have begun audits in some of the organizations to ensure that these dollars are directed for the purpose that they were intended.

I think it's important to note that all of these dollars that are flowing now do have an accountability mechanism. We are ensuring that the hospitals do sign back. This also goes for any of the new beds that are being



announced for a rehab complex, that the dollars will flow specifically for the purpose that they were intended.

**Ms Lankin:** That obviously is the appropriate way to proceed. I'm glad to hear that. It does make me even more concerned that none of the measures that have been announced seem to be having the dramatic kind of impact that one would hope if we've had the accountability that in fact the funds were being used fully for that.

I just want to ask you if you have any expectation. The most recent announcement you made to solve the emergency room situation was \$6 million of ministry money for the alternative payment program; it requires \$66 million of investment from hospitals' existing operating budgets, if they were all to buy in. That's the total amount. That's the \$90,000 per emergency site. Do you have any direct information as to how many hospitals have agreed, have reallocated the \$90,000, are prepared to go?

**Mr King:** Again, the recent emergency announcement has a number of factors in there, but if you want to speak specifically to the alternate payment plan, Mary Catherine Lindberg is also here, the assistant deputy minister responsible for that. The alternate payment plan was for 55 emergency departments that see over 35,000 patients.

**Ms Lankin:** My question to you is, how many of the 55 have signed on?

**Mr King:** The details of that, the rollout of the numbers, have just gone out to the hospitals. We do not have signed contracts back. This is a contract between the hospital, the physician and the ministry. We are very early in those stages.

**Ms Lankin:** When do we expect that announcement is going to actually change something in the emergency room with respect to the high level of redirects that we're seeing?

**Mr King:** We hope that will occur very quickly, with the physicians being on an alternate payment plan and dealing with patients in the emergency departments. We hope to have that in this fall. But we are just working through the process. As you know, the announcement was just made, and we need to take the necessary time to sort out the issues with the physicians and sit down with each of them and have sign-backs to the ministry.

**Ms Lankin:** I understand that ADM Lindberg would be responsible for the alternate payment plan, the structured negotiations with doctors. But in your area of responsibility relating to the hospitals, from those 55 hospitals, how many of them are interested in pursuing this and if any of them see \$90,000 per emergency site from their operating budget, given the deficit projections they already have, as problematic? As you know, \$90,000 could hire an additional two nurses and yet they've got to make this contribution to make this overall program work. What have the indications been? Do you have any hospitals that have—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think it's important to note that that initiative was supported by the physicians and by the hospitals. It was an announcement that was meant to

alleviate the pressures in the emergency rooms and it was a recommendation from our health partners.

**Ms Lankin:** Could I indicate that what they told me was that the concept was endorsed; they, the hospitals, didn't know it was going to cost them bucks out of their operating dollars.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Let's go back to the first two rounds of money that was made available because, as you know, this final announcement dealt with the larger hospitals and the teaching hospitals. I'm sure someone has the figures, but there was very, very positive uptake on the initial two rounds of money that was made available in order to provide alternative payment plans to the hospitals. Certainly the response I've had thus far is that there will be excellent take-up from the larger hospitals that now have that alternative available to them as well.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, in your earlier—

**Mr King:** Excuse me, could I just finish—

**Ms Lankin:** Actually, Mr King, you know what? I'm running out of time. Could you do it really, really quickly so I can get one more question in.

**Mr King:** Really quickly, I think it's important for us to understand that this was at the request of the hospitals, that they wanted this plan. Also, the OMA worked very closely with us to come up with this scheme. So I think that we should all feel proud of that.

**Ms Lankin:** I truly appreciate that, and actually I am a very big fan of moving doctors from fee-for-service to an alternate payment plan. You'll get no argument from me on that. My concern is an additional pressure of \$90,000 per emergency site on our hospital operating budgets when we're short of beds and we've got projected deficits. So it's the mechanism and whether or not that will have an impact on uptake, but we will see as you work through that what the impact of the actual payment plan is.

The last question I want to ask you, Minister: I am sure by now that you will be familiar with the evidence presented at the Fleuelling inquest by Dr Scholl and his analysis of the emergency room crisis that is facing the province and his clear finding that from 1997 forward we have had a dramatic escalation in the crisis. He relates that to the government's restructuring of hospitals. You have said many times, you did say today and you have said in response to questions in the House—you've talked about the dramatic increased utilization of hospitals as a phenomenon in some way.

His conclusions—I won't go through all the facts; we don't have time here; we might when come back to another round—are very clear in which he says "severe overcrowding and gridlock"—and he's talking now Toronto-GTA, so I'll focus in on that—"represent a new and distinct problem." It's not the same problem that's been going on for 15 years, which has been one of the things the ministry has said. The seasonal effect is quite small, which makes you wonder about the flex beds linked to seasons, whether that's going to help us enough to fix the problem; that the problem "is not due to increased patient demands on emergency services and

that campaigns designed to reduce public utilization"—I guess campaigns around alternatives when you've got a cold or the influenza shots or whatever—"are unlikely to be helpful." He links this to the issue of bed numbers—I know we'll have an opportunity to come back and talk about the actual bed numbers—but specifically to 1997 and restructuring since then.

Would you either comment or, if you haven't had a chance to have a full briefing on Dr Scholl's report, in any event it would be nice if you would provide the committee with a ministry response to the findings that Dr Scholl presented to the Fleuelling inquest.

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**The Vice-Chair:** Did you just want to give a quick comment to the committee?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll respond very briefly. Obviously, we are looking forward to receiving all of the recommendations from the Fleuelling inquest. That information, along with all the others, will be carefully reviewed by the ministry and recommendations that are provided for us we certainly would be following through and implementing.

I can assure you that the issue of emergency room pressures is one that is increasingly facing all provinces and territories in Canada today. There appears to be increasing utilization. We have adopted a comprehensive plan to respond and, of course, that includes adding the 20,000 long-term-care beds, because we'd had none constructed. It includes expanding community services. It includes the implementation of our primary care reform, where we have doctors available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It includes the expansion of Telehealth.

We do, as I say, have plans, but we certainly look forward to receiving the recommendations from the Fleuelling inquest and moving forward with those.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much—

**Ms Lankin:** On a point of order: I know that the documentation Dr Scholl presented is in the hands of the ministry, and I would like to request that there be a response to the findings presented to this committee, because it relates to our vote with respect to the hospital vote item and whether or not the measures contained with respect to emergency are going to be addressed by the particular vote items that have been set out in the estimates or not. So I would place on the record a request for a ministry response, specifically Dr Scholl's report.

**The Vice-Chair:** Do you want this response by the next meeting of the estimates committee tomorrow, or what?

**Ms Lankin:** I believe if the ministry has the document, that analysis would be done. I would like to request it be done by tomorrow, but I understand that it's possible there hasn't been something written and I think that would be unreasonable, so I would ask that we receive that before the end of the week.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We'll prepare a response for Ms Lankin to the issue that has been raised.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. Mr Wettlaufer, you have 30 minutes in response.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Minister, I hope you will permit a little bit of a monologue before I get to my question, because you know of my very long-time interest in health matters.

Prior to my being elected in 1995, when I was in private business, I insured a number of long-term-care homes. I can recall discussing with some of the operators of these homes around the province that they were aware of studies that had been done, I believe by the ministry, which indicated a need for a long-term-care strategy and indicated a need for many more long-term-care beds, because of the stress that the failure of the two previous governments to establish any long-term-care beds was putting on emergency care services in the hospitals and the stress it was putting on these homes themselves, because they had long waiting lists.

In addition to that, our area—Waterloo region—is a very important economic part of this province and, in fact, a very important economic part of this country.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** It's the high-tech capital.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** It's the high-tech capital of Ontario, yes.

We had no investment in health care to indicate the importance, ie, we did not have a cardiac centre, we did not have cancer care, we did not have MRIs—we can go on and on—or dialysis. In the course of the last couple of years since 1998, we have had in our region a cardiac catheterization lab Headstart project for \$6.5 million, and that is to be operational by the end of this year; we have had \$564,000 for dialysis services; and we have had approval of \$33 million in capital funding for the grant of a regional cancer centre, and that is to be fully operational, of course, by the spring of 2002. You were in our city about two or three weeks ago to make that announcement, and I was very happy about that. In September you announced that they would receive an additional \$3.7-million budget. That was in order to provide cancer services by the end of October next year. That, I understand, is ahead of schedule.

You have provided \$37 million for cancer services in Kitchener for fiscal year 1999-2000. Long-term care: we have announced 506 new long-term-care beds, the first beds in our region in 10 years. You have budgeted \$41 million for the long-term-care facility, and you have budgeted over \$39 million for CCAC funding in our region. This is funding that was most welcome for this very important economic region that hadn't seen any appropriate funding at all in the previous 10 years.

What I'm looking for is an indication to us, as part of this long-term-care strategy, of what kind of access this will provide to emergency care in our area.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think it's abundantly clear that prior to 1995, there had not been any major restructuring or evaluation of the needs of the people in the province when it comes to the delivery of health services. There had been the closing of about 10,000 beds by previous governments, but there had been no closing of any



hospital wings or addition of any other services to respond to the needs of those individuals.

When we were elected, it became abundantly clear that we were the last province in Canada to take a look at how we could best meet the needs of our growing and aging population. So we set about doing that, and it became abundantly clear that health services had not been expanding as they should, and there was a need not only to bring services closer to home, but to ensure that services were going to be available for people at all ages of their lives.

Of course, one of the critical areas where there had been no action at all was in the area of long-term-care beds. Since 1988, there had been no new beds awarded anywhere in Ontario. This had the impact of forcing people who belong in a long-term-care facility into an acute care bed in the hospital. Today, until we get those beds constructed, we still have people in those acute care beds who, if the beds had been built and awarded between 1988 and the time we made our announcement, would not need to be there. The construction of the 20,000 beds is certainly going to alleviate the emergency room pressures; there won't be the same backup.

I just want to indicate that we had originally said we'd construct these beds in eight years. We've now moved the timeline up so they'll all be built in six years. That will certainly have a very positive impact on alleviating some of the pressure in the emergency rooms. However, we can't stop with 20,000 beds. We're already going to be taking a look at this year in our business planning as to what we need in the year 2005 and beyond, because we do have this growing population.

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The other area where we've seen neglect was in the construction of additional cancer and cardiac centres. We hadn't seen any major capital construction or expansion of facilities until we made our announcements, and they involve three new cardiac centres. Again, we have this growing aging population, and the need for the centres is there. We have three presently being constructed, not only in your community in Kitchener but also in York and in Mississauga.

We know the incidence of cancer is increasing, unfortunately, by about 3%. I'm very pleased to say our government has made a commitment to expand cancer facilities in this province, and we have five new centres which are going to be providing services closer to home. We have St Catharines, Mississauga, again Kitchener and Durham, as well as Sault Ste Marie. We're also expanding the facilities in some other communities, so that we have services closer to home.

We have made remarkable strides in bringing dialysis services closer to people in this province. Just recently, I announced 12 new centres in places like Fort Frances up north, Hawkesville, Winchester, Picton, Bancroft. It's going to mean that people do not need to be driving three times a week through the severe winters we have. Again, it's part of bringing services closer to home. We're

tripling the number of MRIs in the province, and we're looking at expanding MRIs even further.

Certainly the initiatives we have undertaken are unprecedented in this province. We do have a comprehensive plan to improve and strengthen our health services to ensure that our hospitals are state-of-the-art centres of excellence, and that people in this province are going to have services close to home that respond to the needs of people at all ages.

Another good example is our Healthy Babies program. We know now that if we can screen all these children at birth, we're going to see fewer health problems later in life. We're going to have fewer children experiencing difficulties when they get to school, there will be a greater opportunity for them to have academic achievement and these children should have fewer problems with the law.

As I say, when we were elected in 1995, we realized there had been no restructuring of health services to respond to the needs of our population. Really, our services reflected the needs of people in the 1960s and the 1970s. They didn't reflect the fact that most surgery today—70% or more—is done on an outpatient basis. Certainly the steps we've taken are going to ensure that services are available closer to home and in new, state-of-the-art facilities.

**The Vice-Chair: Mr Stewart.**

**Mr Stewart:** I'd like to make a couple of comments, if I may, Madam Minister, before I ask you a question. I believe there have been absolutely tremendous achievements in health care in this province over the last five years. I listen very intently to the opposition members, whether they're in the House or out of the House, who criticize health care. When they criticize health care, I believe they are criticizing health care workers. I want to make it public, and I want to make it very loud and clear that I believe we have the finest health care workers of any province and probably of any place in the world. They are dedicated, and they do an absolutely tremendous job. I want to make that very clear.

I have to look at the great riding of Peterborough, where we have again been very fortunate to have the ministry, and indeed yourself, come down and look at the facilities we have that have not been upgraded by any government prior to ours coming into effect in 1995. Let me speak first of the dialysis unit, which is a private facility. As of two weeks ago, a new facility will be opened in the hospital for advanced dialysis care. The dialysis unit we got in 1996, approximately eight to 10 months after our government came into being—we had waited 15 years to get that unit and nobody responded. Dr Bill Hughes, who is known in the ministry, had been trying to get a cath lab in that community for at least 10 to 12 years. We opened it, along with yourself, about six or eight months ago. That is without a doubt the finest cath lab in North America, and I believe, and I stand to be corrected, it is the first swing lab in Canada. I suggest to any of you who don't think we are putting money into health care to come and visit that facility. I also want to comment that it was with the help and co-operation of



partners, being the community and the people along with yourself and the ministry.

I also want to point to the MRI. I believe—and I stand to be corrected—there are 31 units going in. Ours in Peterborough is on order. Again, it's something that's been wanted and needed for probably the last 10 to 12 years, and again this government responded to the health care needs of our community.

The final straw that really says it all is that most of our hospital was built in 1946, when there was neither the technology nor the equipment available, and our hospital served the community well. As you know, about two months ago we announced a brand new hospital to be built in the community to serve a very large community. It is a community that I believe has the third-highest seniors population in this province, and we have to prepare for that.

Those are a few of things. That's not counting the one-time funding for various things like the deficit the hospital had, on which we worked with them. There was an interesting comment the other day from the CEO of the hospital, Rob Devitt, that working with the ministries is the way to go. If you work together and form these types of partnerships with any ministry, whether it be the Ministry of Health or whatever, that's when things happen. The end result in this case is that you will get finer care for the people of your community.

What it has done over the last five years—again we have added accountability and efficiencies within the hospital sector. In business we look at all the aspects today, and we find that we have found every possible saving we could. Well, I suggest that you had better re-look at it tomorrow, because you'll find a whole lot more, and ones that probably are needed but will not have an effect on the delivery of the service you offer.

So there have been a number of things. I could go on a long time regarding the \$4.3 million in capital funds and \$17 million for Peterborough CCACs. That brings me to my question. The CCAC operation in my community is working absolutely tremendously. There was a major increase in its funding about two years ago. Why? Because of consultation with the ministry, with the CCAC and with the community, again because of our large population of seniors. I am a great believer in home care. It's a whole lot easier to recover in the familiar surroundings of your home than in a stark, white hospital, providing you get the services and care. That is certainly what our CCAC is doing, as well, I believe, as all the CCACs across the province.

I know that part of the government's overarching objective in health care restructuring was to ensure that all Ontarians have access to community care services. As I said, I truly believe that allowing them to stay in the comfort of their home—when you talk to some of the folks who are getting that care, the comments they make are absolutely wonderful. It's interesting to note that they want the same person to help them, because they're familiar with it. The opposition would have us believe that Ontarians have little or no access to community care in Ontario.

**1650**

I know that our government has invested significant dollars in community care, and indeed they have in my own riding of Peterborough. Could you give me details on these investments and a real picture of the status of community care in the province?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think one of the comments that you alluded to is quite interesting. I'll go back to what I said about how one of the things that our government has done is bring services closer to home. Before 1995 there seemed to be a tendency whereby if there needed to be an expansion of services, you expanded at the facility that already had cancer or cardiac or an MRI. I think you, Mr Stewart, have indicated that the people in Peterborough had been looking for these services for a long, long time and since 1995 they have received additional dialysis services, they have received certainly the heart catheterization lab and yes, I think it is, one of the finest in North America. There is additional support for community services as well.

But just in response to the questions regarding community care services, as you know, we are expanding the community care services by \$551 million. In this province, people receive nursing support in their home, they receive therapy and they receive homemaking. I'm proud to say that we are one of the very few provinces that do not charge any co-payment for those services. There are additional services that we support, such as Meals on Wheels, and again we have one of the most generous community service programs in all of Canada. In fact the money that we have available in our community services is actually the highest per capita in all of Canada, followed by Manitoba. Certainly when I talk to my colleagues at FPT conferences, they would like to be in a position where they could offer similar services to what we're providing here. We're fortunate that in this province we have a very strong economy, and that has enabled us, each year, to add money not only to our overall health budget but particularly in the area of community services.

As you know, we're reviewing our program. We're going to take a look at the strengths of the program and what changes we can make to make our community services program even better for the people that we serve in the province of Ontario.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** I just wanted, for the record, to get a few London initiatives in, because so far today one would think that Waterloo and Peterborough received all of the funding in the entire province. I just want to assure my constituents that we were part of all of that and certainly I was there for many of the announcements: \$150 million in capital funding to implement the health services restructuring directives in relation to the London Health Sciences Centre and St Joseph's Health Centre. As you know, \$150 million in capital funding is an enormous amount.

Also, in the spring the London Health Sciences Centre received \$60.4 million in additional funding as part of the \$435 million provided to hospitals province-wide. In

1999-2000: \$478,000 for cardiac services for London and its Health Sciences Corp; \$753,000 for dialysis services to London, and that included the satellite location in Goderich; the same fiscal year, \$27 million on operational funding for cancer services. The list goes on: \$800,000 annually per MRI, and there's two in London; \$2 million in mental health reinvestments. Then when we look at long-term-care beds, London received 160 new long-term-care beds, \$61 million toward funding that and \$40 million toward the CCAC, which is very important. My wife works for a service that is contracted out through CCAC.

This was all done, Minister, at a time when, as you know, there was very little federal funding for health care.

We can certainly argue that when there are deficits with governments, they need to be dealt with. The federal government—and I won't be partisan in any way—did deal with that deficit. The vast majority of it was dealt with by cutting transfers to the provinces. Whether that was right or wrong could be a debate for a different day. What bothers me is that when the surpluses came, the Premier and yourself had to undertake an extensive public education campaign to allow the public to know that the federal government had not reinvested in this area, in fact had not even put back the money they took away in 1994. During that time, they were certainly still spending money. HRDC, as we know, got \$3 billion, \$1 billion went missing and so on, but nothing to health care. I want to commend you on that campaign because every day I heard people saying, "We didn't know that the federal government was not taking part in this."

Those being the facts, and there certainly is some confusion, can you outline the agreement with the federal government?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I certainly can. Thank you very much. Certainly London has received a fair share of the funding, but if we look at communities such as Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie and others, they've all received significant improvements in funding since 1995. If we take a look at the federal government, it was actually very unfortunate that they decided to reduce the transfer payments to the provinces and territories, because I will tell you, many of our colleagues throughout Canada did not enjoy the strong economy that we have experienced here. Some of them have experienced some real difficulty in responding to the pressures they face, because pressures we face in Ontario are not unique just to Ontario. We all have the increasing utilization of the health system and the growing and aging population.

Recently, the federal government gave us back most of what they had taken away in 1994-95. However, unfortunately, not only did they not give us back everything they'd taken away but the funding is not going to be available until April 1, 2001. That's disappointing because obviously all provinces and territories in Canada could have used the additional money. As I say, the same pressures are being experienced by everyone from coast to coast to coast, and they are the growing population, the

aging population, the increased cost of drugs—and maybe I'll just talk about drugs at this point in time.

Our drug costs are increasing dramatically. When I became Minister of Health three years ago, it was about 10%. Then it went up to 15% and in the last quarter we have seen an increase in the cost of drugs of 19%.

There's the increased cost of new technology, of new medical equipment. These are all pressures that the federal government is simply not recognizing in increasing the transfer payments. There's the increased cost of community services—again, a tremendous increase in utilization of community services. There is a need for more long-term-care beds throughout Canada. Of course all provinces would like to follow what we're doing, and that is being able to move to a primary care network and providing 24-hour, seven-day-a-week care to people in their provinces and their territories, but again that requires additional money. It was a good first step that the federal government took. However, as I say, they were simply giving us back what they'd taken away, and they didn't even give us back everything they'd taken away. Up until now, we're not seeing any recognition of the fact that we have inflation and we have the pressures that I have just mentioned.

**1700**

They still are not a full-funding partner. We were receiving about 10 cents on the dollar before they made this announcement. In the future, it may go up to 13 or 14 cents on the dollar, but certainly that's a long way from the 50%-50% sharing that at one time the federal government had indicated would be appropriate.

While they decrease funding, we've had to step in and increase our funding. We've increased our funding by about \$4 billion since 1995. We're going to continue to encourage the federal government to become a full partner in providing health services. People in Canada have identified this as a number one priority for them.

I guess the other point I would like to make is—

**The Vice-Chair:** You should make it within a couple of seconds, because at 5—but you also could continue, because you have 30 minutes of wrap-up after this. If you want to just roll into that, it's fine with me.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The money for equipment will be released shortly, I hope. The money for technology, unfortunately, is going to go into a corporation, so we're not going to see that funding for a while. The money for primary care networks won't be available right away either.

So I guess, although there has been some restoration of money, most of it will not be available to us until after April 1, 2001.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, and you may proceed. You have 30 minutes, Minister, to wrap up.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What I'm going to do at this point in time is call upon—

**Mrs McLeod:** Just before you begin, can I understand what the rotation is?

**The Vice-Chair:** The rotation list started off, and now the minister had 30 minutes to finish her presentation.



**Mrs McLeod:** So this is her 30 minutes, before the 20-minute rotation begins again?

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** At this point in time, I will call upon the deputy minister to respond more thoroughly to the questions that were asked by Mrs McLeod the first day of estimates.

**Mr Daniel Burns:** I'm Daniel Burns. I'm the deputy in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

While I wasn't present, I understand that at last week's meeting questions were raised about the accuracy of figures we provided in the interim actuals columns in some of the estimates books.

As a consequence of the questions being raised, we've done a very thorough reassessment, both of the numbers and of the administrative work around that. I would like to ask Michelle DiEmanuele, the chief administrative officer of the ministry, to give a brief explanation of the work we've done and what happened with the material that we provided, both last time and on Friday.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Because there was some question with respect to the overall accuracy of the ministry's accounting, I want to first begin by reminding individuals that on May 30 the official printed estimates were tabled in the Legislature. Those estimates are correct. They did not include interim actuals, as they do not usually. They represent the estimates for a given year as well as the public accounts figures for the previous year.

This information, as people know, is then taken and used to, in essence, develop the briefing book, which you have before you. It's at that point that interim actuals are actually added to the information tabled in the House. That is used as a point of reference, as we discussed last week, as information to allow you to get a sense of the ebb and flow of the ministry budget.

That information that we tabled with you last week, in terms of the interim actual figures, was indeed incorrect, and we have provided you with summary pages for 8, 9 and 16 that are now correct. It's also important to remind individuals that the interim actuals are not voted on as part of this process.

I want to also assure individuals of the committee that in reviewing this, we did go back to the ministry and look at the master copy—in essence, our master spreadsheet—and in fact all the information on that master spreadsheet was correct and had been verified by our manager of the controllership unit.

In essence, what has happened was that as that information was taken from a master copy and downloaded into a new template in the briefing book, there was a system error and a link file was slipped and that's why the column in the interim actuals did not add up. But the rest of the information in the remainder of the briefing book was indeed correct, and the interim actuals in the other sections of the book, with the exception of the summaries, was indeed correct.

There was a question also asked about when the interim actuals were taken. For the record, those were taken on April 20, 2000. I want to also indicate to

members that the entire book was reviewed as a result of that error being discovered, and you have materials before you, particularly in appendix B, which have one additional error which was uncovered, which is a transposition of numbers that relate to Cancer Care Ontario.

Finally, Ms Lankin asked for some additional information with respect to the minister's salary. We've provided additional information in appendix C, I believe, and I assume and trust that was sufficient information for the committee.

I just want to reiterate that the error on the interim actuals was solely limited to the summary tables and that the information in the detailed standard accounts was in fact correct. Finally, I want to express on behalf of the ministry and on behalf of the division I represent my apologies to this committee for the inconvenience that it has caused.

**Mr Burns:** In conclusion, I would emphasize that the assessment we made of the administrative processes at work here was thorough. The combination of technology error and human checking error that led to the mistake in the column, we believe, was a sole error, and we've put in place, we think, the remedial actions required to ensure that we don't have a repetition.

**Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek):** If I may, I have prepared a bit of a written text. I tend to be slightly more loquacious, so if you could give me the one-minute warning, it would be helpful, toward the end of it.

**The Vice-Chair:** OK, but first I just want to thank the minister for responding at the time this happened, when Mrs McLeod raised the issue, and the matter is sort of back on stream.

So, Mr Clark, you say you want a one-minute warning. We'll be going until 5:30; so I'll give you a one-minute warning.

**Mr Clark:** Thank you, sir.

As you know, we're spending more than \$22 billion on health care this year alone. That's up \$1.4 billion from last year, and more than any government in the history of the province. This is intrinsic to our commitment to forge a sustainable health system.

Two of the most important aspects of such a system are mental health and community services. We recently announced funding of \$92.5 million in permanent new funding for the long-term-care community service sector. This represents some \$22.4 million—\$6.9 million in stabilization and \$15.5 million in equity funding—for mental health care agencies across Ontario.

The \$15.5 million equity funding will provide supportive housing, attendant care, adult day programs and other community services such as Meals on Wheels and friendly visiting. It will benefit seniors who prefer to live at home, as well as people recovering from recent hospital stays and people with physical disabilities. This is part of the \$1.2 billion in funding to expand long-term care that our government announced in April 1998. That figure includes \$551 million for long-term-care community services.



The new funding of long-term-care community services is being distributed across Ontario using an equity funding model. Service areas targeted to receive additional funds are those that currently have less than their fair share of long-term-care resources in comparison to other areas of the province. As new demographic information on our service areas becomes available, ministry staff will monitor the need for long-term-care services across the province to ensure that community funding is appropriately directed to the areas with the greatest need. Funding for community services will be adjusted over time, based on actual population growth.

1710

As well, we established a homemaker recruitment and retention workgroup to explore ways of recruiting and retaining personal support workers and homemakers. The workgroup identifies issues affecting recruitment and retention, including training and education, working conditions and compensation. Our strategies call for increased funding to CCACs to support, in turn, a significant increase in PSW-homemaker wages to achieve that parity and fund increases applied to pay equity obligations.

Our vision of the future is that of a seamless health system in which everyone—and that includes health providers, health professionals, community-based services and volunteer organizations—works in partnership to make health and well-being everyday realities.

And this is crucial in Ontario's system of mental health services.

Since taking office in 1995, our government has endeavoured to build a mental health system that is integrated, accessible and sustainable. Our government's implementation plan for achieving these system goals are outlined in Making It Happen, which Minister Witmer released in August of 1999.

Creating an effective system of services for people with mental illness means building and enhancing partnerships with psychiatrists, physicians and other stakeholders in mental health care. It also means undertaking bold initiatives to modernize the system, to reflect contemporary practices and to eliminate barriers between hospital and community care. In fact, since 1995, hospital-based care has declined from 75% to 60%, while community care now accounts for 40% of treatment. That's why we have invested more than \$270 million to build a modern mental health system that meets the needs of the people in our communities, with mental health supports that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

These investments mean better access to care for people with mental illness and healthier communities, and they include: \$38.3 million to expand community-based mental health services in Kingston, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Toronto; \$19.1 million to expand community-based mental health services to a total of 51 assertive community treatment teams, and to enhance court diversion, psychogeriatric outreach, case management and crisis support services; \$23.5 million

for community investment funding to establish and enhance assertive community treatment teams, case management, family support and crisis response services across the province; \$60 million for additional mental health beds and increased community-based services; \$52.3 million in anticipated costs for introducing three anti-psychotic drugs to the Ontario drug formulary; \$45 million to provide housing support and mental health care supports and services for homeless individuals; \$8 million in funding for 30 new children's mental health beds; \$7.9 million in capital funding to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; \$7 million to expand the treatment of eating disorders in Ontario; \$4.2 million in increased sessional fee spending for psychiatrists; \$2.7 million for mental health and addiction services as part of our government's renewed partnership with the Canadian Hearing Society; \$2.5 million for hard-to-reach, socially isolated people with serious mental illness in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and London.

We're proud of our major reform initiatives such as:

- 2000 and Beyond: Strengthening Ontario's Mental Health System and the Mental Health Law Education Project developed to inform Ontarians, including professionals, about their rights and responsibilities under existing mental health legislation.

- Making It Happen: the mental health system reform implementation strategy and service guidelines, a massive initiative involving such multiple components as the establishment of mental health implementation task forces across the province to ensure the implementation of the directions outlined in Making It Happen. Thus far, task forces have been established in the northeast and the northwest, as well as in the Ottawa area and in the Hamilton-Niagara region.

- A review of the Mental Health Act to ensure accessibility, accountability, public safety and cost-effectiveness, which resulted in the passage of Bill 68.

- Recommendations for comprehensive housing for those with serious mental illness.

- Strategies to ensure that we have the capacity to serve the needs of clients with mental illness who are also involved in the justice system.

We're also proud to have established the Northeast Mental Health Implementation Task Force to develop recommendations on provincial psychiatric hospital divestment, community reinvestments and implementation of mental health reform initiatives.

The task force delivered its first report in January, focusing on the siting and sizing of the northeast mental health system. Phase 2 will concentrate on specifics, such as strengthening supports and services to consumers and their families.

Overall, we spend more than \$2.4 billion on mental health programs and services encompassing a range from provincial and specialty psychiatric hospitals to community-based services.

However, one of the challenges confronting our government is the need to balance community safety and the needs of the mentally ill individual. Our solution to this

highly sensitive situation is the previously mentioned Bill 68, which passed earlier this year with support from all political parties, as well as the medical and legal communities. Bill 68 is also known as Brian's Law. Its thrust is to remove barriers blocking access to care and treatment for the safety of the patient and the public. Rightly heralded as a major step in providing the legislative framework for a continuum of care from institutional to community-based living, Brian's Law is one of our government's proudest achievements.

I am personally gratified to have been instrumental in the drafting and passage of Brian's Law and I'd like to tell you a little about how that came about. To understand the importance of Brian's Law, we must recall its genesis. The legislation is named after Brian Smith, the sportscaster who was randomly murdered in 1995 by an individual suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. At the inquest into Brian's death, the jury recommended a comprehensive review of Ontario's mental health legislation and the introduction of community-based treatment programs to ensure that people with serious mental illness who pose a danger to themselves or others get the treatment they so desperately require.

In June 1998, the Mental Health Act and related legislation was placed under government review in response to the recommendations in Dan Newman's report, 2000 and Beyond. Brian's Law incorporates changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and stands as a vital component in the reform of the mental health system. At its heart is our response to numerous coroner's juries, the pleas of the families of the mentally ill, the families of victims and assessments from police and mental health care professionals.

Brian's Law amends the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act to help build a more comprehensive system by expanding committal criteria in the old Mental Health Act to allow the chronically mentally ill, their families and designated health professionals to intervene at an earlier stage in the committal process. Brian's Law enables community treatment orders, CTOs, for those with serious mental illness to permit appropriate treatment in the community as a less restrictive alternative to hospitalization.

It's important to note that the person subject to a CTO retains a variety of protections under the amendments. This includes the power to request a review of the CTO before the Consent and Capacity Board each time a CTO is issued or renewed—a mandatory review comes with each renewal—the power to challenge a finding of incapacity to consent to treatment and the power to request a re-examination by the issuing physician.

Brian's Law allows for the removal of the requirement for police to observe disorderly conduct before taking an individual into custody. Section 17 of the earlier Mental Health Act was repealed to remove the requirement that a police officer must personally observe disorderly conduct before apprehending the individual and taking that person to a physician for examination. Our government saw the need for such far-reaching changes when we took office

in 1995, and since then we've worked hard to usher in change, to reform the mental health system.

Our basis is the advice and counsel of the very people who deal on a day-to-day basis with the consequences of behaviour by those who've been unable to get the care and treatment to which each Ontarian is entitled. The speedy passage of Brian's Law makes it clear that our government is responding to the heartfelt cries of those caught in the maelstrom of events involving the seriously mentally ill.

In preparing the legislation, I was asked to conduct regional consultations on the parameters of change with a wide range of stakeholders including family members, psychiatrists and others such as patients' rights groups, mental health association officials, counsellors and health centre directors. In these stakeholder meetings, held this past March and April, we heard from almost 300 participants from across the province. We held seven hearings in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa to consult with experts, professionals and survivors. We sought and received advice from mental health experts around the world.

However, consultations did not end there. Even after the legislation's first reading, we continued to hear presentations from experts in the field of mental health and from individuals and families whose lives have been affected by the mental health system. I cannot emphasize strongly enough how critical this legislation was to the reform of the mental health system. It removed prior legislation that had stymied families, police and social workers for years. Brian's Law shores up the system and addresses the needs of those with mental illness and their families while ensuring safety for the public.

The legislation serves to honour the memories of Brian Smith, Zachary Antidormi and other innocents. It ensures that other families will not have to endure what Alana Kainz, Brian Smith's widow, and Lori and Tony Antidormi, have suffered. Our government's vision for mental health services in Ontario is one of a seamless system in which everyone—hospitals, doctors, physiotherapists, community services and volunteer organizations—works together to make health and well-being everyday realities.

1720

I'd like to mention another important direction in our health system, and this one involves our changing demographics. Conclusive factors show that Ontarians are living longer than ever, factors such as early deaths from heart disease on the decline, the growth of a new health consciousness, and advanced medical technologies and drug therapies. But this doesn't take into account the massive impact of the baby-boom generation. It is estimated that within 20 years there will be more seniors than people under 21 in this country. The greying of the largest generation in history will have an unprecedented impact on society, as well as its impact on health spending.

As I've mentioned, we are spending more than \$22 billion on health care this year alone. That exceeds any



government in the history of this province. I'd like to point out what this \$22 billion funds: hospitals, which include 161 corporations on 210 sites; health care providers, which include 20,000 physicians, 80,000 nurses and 23 regulated health professions; mental health services, which include nine psychiatric hospitals, five speciality psychiatric hospitals, community health programs and homes for special care; drugs, which include more than 3,000 prescription drugs listed in the Ontario drug benefit formulary; community services, which include 43 community care access centres, 1,100 assistive device vendors, 1,200 long-term-care agencies, 55 community health centres, 385 clinical laboratories, 1,011 independent health facilities, and 160 agencies for drug and alcohol treatment services.

Trends within the trends provide meaningful snapshots of Ontario's population and health system. For example, seniors represent only 12% of the population but they account for 50% of our annual health budget.

Impressive as these services are, we know the demand is going to increase. Currently, more than 600,000 Ontarians have diabetes. The need for dialysis services is growing, and four out of every 10 people with diabetes will develop debilitating and long-term complications from the disease.

We continue to see the number of new cases of cancer rising at a rate of 3% annually. Meanwhile, cardiac management cases have increased by more than 70% and cardiac surgery by more than 40%.

Other skyrocketing health costs involve the 15% to 20% of Ontarians who have arthritis, the province's leading chronic disease and cause of pain and disability, and drug costs increasing by 14%, most of which are consumed by Ontarians over 65 years of age.

On the positive side, in human terms, are the far-reaching revolutions in the medical field: in technology and equipment, treatment approaches, pharmaceuticals, multiple organ transplants, new cancer treatments and less invasive cardiac surgery.

From our thorough investigations we have reached a new and clearly defined vision. Our goal is a health system that's integrated, accountable and, above all, sustainable. It's a system that ensures Ontarians universal access to quality health services—services to which they're entitled—at every stage of their lives.

Ours is a vision of a system in which everyone—hospitals; doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals; along with community services, long-term-care facilities, volunteer organizations and so many others—works in partnership to make health and well-being everyday realities.

This is especially crucial in light of the growing, aging population, and that's why our government is investing an additional \$1.2 billion in long-term-care services and facilities, the most ambitious expansion of long-term care in the province's history.

At the same time, we've shown great strides in restructuring the province's hospital system. We've committed to a \$2.3-billion capital investment, and we're

already seeing new, innovative planning and construction underway.

Every dollar we've saved modernizing the system has been reinvested into priority health services, and this means front-line patient care. So far the reinvestment has topped \$1.5 billion and it serves priority programs such as cardiac care, cancer care, dialysis and hip and knee replacements.

Over the past year alone we've invested \$1.4 billion more in health services as our commitment to quality health care. Since coming to office, we have increased health care operating spending by \$4.4 billion.

One of the cornerstones of our vision for the future of our health system is primary care reform. This entails the development of an accessible, integrated, dependable system providing comprehensive care to patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We are proud to say that Ontario is at the forefront of primary care reform. We are leading the rest of Canada. By working co-operatively with Ontario physicians, our goal is to have 80% of eligible family doctors practising in primary care networks over the next four years. We're well underway.

Since 1995, we have set up primary care pilot projects in seven communities with the co-operation and assistance of the Ontario Medical Association.

In our spring budget we announced spending of \$150 million, starting next year, to provide for new information systems to help with the transition to primary care networks. We'll also dedicate \$100 million over the next four years to expand the primary care system.

I'd like to highlight a few of the government's other health initiatives.

We will enhance patient care through our investment of \$110 million for improved medical supervision in home care settings and improved psychiatric services.

We will increase annual funding by \$54 million for priority programs such as cancer care, end-stage renal disease and cardiac care.

We are establishing a \$180-million system management fund and providing \$75 million to transfer doctors in the academic health science centres to alternate payment programs.

In July 1999 our government opened a telephone health advisory service to northern Ontarians. This toll-free service, called Telehealth, gives callers direct access to trained, experienced triage nurses who provide health advice, information and referral. We're now expanding this immensely valuable service to the greater Toronto area and, in keeping with our future goal, to all communities across the province.

We're taking action to increase access to physicians' services, especially in rural communities. One notable example is our funding of \$4 million for free tuition to medical students who are willing to practise in rural and northern areas following graduation. This fulfills yet another Blueprint commitment.

We will work with communities to assist with physician recruitment in underserved areas. We've already



increased the number of spaces in Ontario medical schools by 40.

Our government has announced the creation of the \$250-million Ontario Innovation Trust last year, which provides matching funds to Ontario colleges, universities, hospitals and research institutes for labs, high-tech equipment and other research infrastructure. In its first year the trust approved over \$161 million in matching funding for 120 projects. In the spring budget our government announced tripling the trust with an additional endowment of \$500 million for research infrastructure, including cancer research facilities.

We're also doubling our funding for the Ontario research and development challenge fund to \$100 million. We have established a team to examine and report back on the most efficacious way to launch a concentrated effort in the fight against cancer.

I'd like to mention our stroke strategy. You may know that strokes kill 20,000 Ontarians each year and are the leading cause of adult neurological disability. But advanced new treatments offer opportunities to reduce death and damage from strokes. We're proposing new funding of \$10 million this year, growing to \$30 million in 2003-04, to link Ontario with the Canadian stroke strategy. Working together, we are developing a comprehensive plan to prevent stroke and rehabilitate its victims.

Toward our objective of improved accountability in the health system, we will spend \$3 million this year on health services accountability, such as a patients' bill of rights, and this amount will grow to \$10 million in 2002-03.

Moreover, hospitals will have their funding directly tied to how well they deliver on the services that concern Ontarians most. Through hospital report cards, the findings will be publicly reported.

I want to emphasize the importance of health promotion and disease prevention programs. We know they provide a great return; create a healthier population; reduce human and financial stress on the system and, in the long run, bolster the system's sustainability. That's why we continue our commitment with health promotion and early detection programs, including, for example, the Ontario breast screening program, with 66 sites across the province, where more than 300,000 women have been screened since 1996.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute.

**Mr Clark:** Thank you. Our goal is to reduce breast cancer deaths by 30% among women aged 50 to 69. More than \$3 million was invested in cervical cancer screening as part of a \$16.6-million group of cancer services for women.

Clearly, the dynamics of demand on the health system have compelled us to think in new and different ways about how we organize health services, how we deliver them and how we pay for them.

1730

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Clark—

**Ms Lankin:** Mr Chair, on a point of order: I recognize fully the ability of the ministry and the minister's office to use the time allocated to them as they see fit. I just want to put on the record how offended I am that, almost verbatim, the parliamentary assistant's speech was large chunks of what the minister simply read into the record last week. We could have used the time in a much more valuable way than to repeat, almost verbatim—

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, on a point of order: I was not here last week, so I found it extremely beneficial.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Ms Lankin:** You know what? There's a Hansard and we were all given copies of it. I'm just saying that it was a waste of the committee's time. It's unfortunate that such little respect is given to the important estimates process.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mrs McLeod, you have 20 minutes. The rotation will start 20 minutes thereafter.

**Mrs McLeod:** What time are we breaking for the vote? Are we breaking early for a vote in the House?

**The Vice-Chair:** Is there a vote in the House? I think we normally break here at 6. If there's a vote in the House, we'll break earlier, but we may break just in time.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you very much. Given the scarcity of time—and I agree with Ms Lankin that we want to use the time we have in as valuable a way as possible—I'm not going to go back over question areas that I've already asked.

I do believe that there may have been a misinterpretation of one of my earlier questions. I've spoken to the assistant deputy minister, and if it's appropriate, I look forward to some correction of the figures tomorrow, because I believe the \$66-million figure that was given in response to my question about emergency room top-ups may actually be the money that has not yet flowed from the government to the hospitals. I understand that \$56 million from a previous announcement on emergency rooms has not yet flowed and, of course, there would be the \$8.5 million that's essentially new money from the last emergency room announcement that won't have flowed yet, which is close to the \$66 million. But I would appreciate not having to go back over that area of questioning today.

I did note that Mr King, in his comments, talked about accountability mechanisms in response to Ms Lankin about hospital bed numbers, as well as about nursing dollars, and the nursing area is the one I want to really spend some time on with the rest of my time today.

In terms of accountability measures and hospital beds, it's going to be very difficult to put accountability mechanisms in place, because there are no benchmarks. The OHA's numbers on how many beds we have today are different from the numbers that the Ministry of Health tabled at the Fleuelling inquest, for example. So when the minister announces that there are to be 463 new acute care beds in Toronto, we don't know whether that's on top of the 7,050 beds that the OHA says we now have or whether it's on top of the 7,282, I think, that the ministry says. I would hope that we get some really solid

figures tabled with this committee in terms of the acute care beds and, for that matter, critical care beds and chronic care beds that we currently have, so that when we return in a year's time we'll have a benchmark to know just exactly how many new beds have been added.

I think that accountability can only be achieved if there is a public accountability, so that all of us are sharing information and there's some agreement on the reality of the numbers. I have no need to use inaccurate figures or represent things inaccurately. I think there are enough challenges without doing that. In the name of public accountability, before I move to the issue of nursing dollars, I would like to ask whether or not the ministry is prepared to table now or in another forum the number of hours of critical care bypass and redirect from emergency rooms across the province, which only the ministry now has access to and has not been shared publicly.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We will certainly respond to that request in the future.

**Mrs McLeod:** Can we expect that from you shortly?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I will certainly ask the staff to provide the information and respond to your question.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that, because I know the data is being kept. I don't think we protect the public from anything by not sharing the realities of the situation.

The second area is whether or not the ministry is tracking the wait times in emergency rooms for either critical care or acute care beds.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, we can provide that information to you.

**Mrs McLeod:** I will look forward to that.

Then I want to turn to the area of nursing, and it does have to do with accountability of numbers. Ms Lankin was saying she didn't want to get into it in the last session, but it is time, essentially under the hospital vote, although on the issue of nursing, the questions we want to ask obviously relate to long-term care and home care. My colleague, when she returns, will have some questions about long-term-care aspects of nursing.

I'd ask you to speak to hospitals specifically. You had made an announcement of how much money was going to hospitals. We're told that it's being tracked, that there are data being kept. I understand that as of May the joint nursing committee of the ministry was not able to say how many nurses had actually been hired, that you had no accurate data. I know, Minister, that you've been quoted as saying that there were 6,000 hired. That doesn't seem to fit, in all honesty, with any figures that we can find in terms of new nursing registrants or in terms of any other reports. We know that the number of nurses in Ontario, according to the CIHI, information was still declining from 1998 to 1999, so obviously my question is, do you have any data and can we see the basis on which any claims about the hiring of nurses is based?

The second question is, of new nurses hired, how many positions are full-time and how many positions are part-time? The reason that I'm very anxious to get this

figure is because obviously our concern is to make sure that there is an adequate number of nurses and when the government makes an announcement that they're allocating money, targeting money to hire additional nursing staff, we all want to make sure it goes to additional nursing staff. But I'm hearing reports about the increasing number of positions that are part-time and casual, and that's true not only in the home care sector, it's also true in the hospital sector.

I understand that at least 56% of nurses hired in Ontario right now are on part-time or casual contracts. That concerns me because I don't think there's continuity of care for patients when that happens. It also concerns me because nurses who are being hired on part-time and casual contracts in many cases may not have long-term disability plans. I wonder whether or not your ministry has access to figures. In terms of nurses who are leaving on long-term disability, I understand that whereas it used to be about five to six nurses per month, we're now seeing as many as 30 nurses per month in this province who are taking leave on a long-term disability plan.

I assume that we can only track the number of nurses who are on full-time or part-time and have access to long-term disability benefits. I'd like to know what percentage of nurses—if you have this data—are actually able to receive long-term disability coverage.

Those are a handful of my questions off the top. Then I'd like to get into the issue of nursing shortage, but if you have any response to the data questions I'm asking at this point.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As you know, the government has made the entire issue of nursing a priority. We set up a task force in 1998. We received the recommendations, and immediately upon receiving the recommendations from the nursing task force, we did announce our commitment to invest an additional \$375 million into nursing.

You've asked many questions, and there are two individuals here who are prepared to respond to the questions that you've asked, but I will tell you that the numbers that we have shared with you are based on preliminary data that we have received from employers. The provincial chief nursing officer is in the process right now of reviewing the nursing plans and asking for resubmissions of plans that do not meet the criteria for creating new permanent positions.

As you know, part of our emphasis in accepting the recommendations and moving forward is that these would be new permanent part-time and full-time positions. Nurses have asked us to move away from casualization. We support that, and we've indicated to employers we want to see that happening.

I will ask George Zegarac specifically to speak to you regarding nursing funding and then, of course, our chief nursing officer in the province, Kathleen MacMillan, will speak to the questions you had on the nursing issues.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that. Can I just make a plea that we don't need the history? I think we've all done our research. We know the history; we just need some numbers, please.



**Ms Kathleen MacMillan:** My name is Kathleen MacMillan. I'm the provincial chief nursing officer.

Unfortunately, I have to convey to you that we are still in the process of reviewing nursing plans from the hospital sector. The reason for that is that the information that came in initially was difficult to sort out by hospitals from priority program funding that had gone to create nursing positions and the nursing enhancement dollars that had gone to create nursing positions. In order to try to really sort that out, we have sent out another questionnaire to the chief nursing officers and to the chief executive officers of the hospital sector.

I requested that information back by December 15. As usual, there are people who are slow getting it back, and we still have some outstanding reports that we're still trying to get. Once we have those, I think that we'll be able to get an accurate picture of the hospital sector which is really a critical part of looking at the full-time/part-time picture.

1740

With respect to the questions about the proportion of full-time and part-time, that is an issue of great concern to me as the chief nursing officer and to the ministry, particularly in the hospital sector. I have discovered that it varies considerably from one hospital to another. Some hospitals have in the neighbourhood of 66% of their nursing staff working full-time in permanent positions. In others, it tends to be much lower.

We see some encouraging trends on the College of Nurses data from last year. As you know, nurses register with the College of Nurses beginning in November of each year. At that time, they self-report on their employment status. It's part of the data we collect. Based on that self-report, given that we had just implemented the recommendations from the nursing task force on April 1, we were beginning to see, I think, some encouraging trends in the data that we were beginning to get at the end of November—a very slight decrease for RNs, in particular, in the proportion of nurses who were working part-time and a slight increase in full-time positions. But it's too early to tell at this point what the implications or the effects of the nursing task force will have on that at this point, and because our data is totally based on nurses' self-report in terms of their reporting on their employment status, we're at the mercy of the cycle of nurses registering.

That said, we do get data from the hospitals collectively through the management information reporting system on the proportion of nurses they have on staff who are full-time and part-time. We get that through the audited financial statements and the operating plans they submit. We are in the process of reviewing that information for the hospital sector right now, so we don't expect to have final numbers from that until sometime next month.

**Mrs McLeod:** I just want to ask this as a straight question. When the minister's given a figure of 6,000 nurses having been hired, what's the figure based on?

**Ms MacMillan:** That's based on our third quarter report. As of December 1999, we were estimating that we

had been able to create—and this is based on the reports from the hospitals and from the long-term-care facilities on surveys. We asked them, "How many positions did you create?" At that point in time, the hospitals had indeed fallen short of the numbers they had told us they were going to create. That's one of the reasons we're being very particular in focusing in on the hospital sector with my office reviewing all the nursing plans.

**Mrs McLeod:** That figure would include both registered nurses and registered practical nurses?

**Ms MacMillan:** That's right.

**Mrs McLeod:** Which is why we might not see similar kinds of figures in the College of Nurses' registrations?

**Ms MacMillan:** That's right. There's a lag in the self-report of nurses. Sometimes data that is circulated comes from the Ontario Nurses' Association, which is the union, and it would reflect their members. They don't unionize every nurse in the province, so they will have a picture that is based on—

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that, but with the two sources of data I've had, I can't through those sources of data verify any increase in nursing. One is the College of Nurses registrants—we only have 1999 data—and the other is the CIHI data, which shows actually a decline in the number of nurses. But we're dealing with—

**Ms MacMillan:** CIHI is also the College of Nurses data.

**Mrs McLeod:** Right. But at that point, in terms of registered nurses, we're dealing with, up until 1999, a decline in nurses. The question I need to ask then is, in the preliminary figures that the minister is using, I need to see a breakdown between RNs and RPNs so that I get a better sense.

**Ms MacMillan:** We can provide that.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm sorry to have so many questions, but it's important because I don't know when I'm going to get the answers back because you keep telling me there's preliminary data, so I'm going to keep putting the questions on for the record.

I'm wondering if you're keeping any data on how many hospitals are hiring nurses from private nursing agencies because they either don't have the budgets or can't staff to carry the overtime.

**Ms MacMillan:** We do get reported data on that, again from the hospitals' operating plans and their audited financial statements, because they do report in that purchased nursing services from outside agencies. That's more difficult to get from other sectors, such as the community, for example.

One of the things we have done is to fund the nursing research unit here in Ontario. We're the only province that has a nursing research unit that's exclusively devoted to looking at research around nursing human resources, planning of nursing human resources and looking at links, which I think is very important, between nursing staffing and patient outcomes. The ministry provides that research unit with \$1 million a year to conduct that research as a result of one of the recommendations from the nursing task force. Now, they again use College of



Nurses data, because that's one of our sources of data, but they also have access to the hospital data and to the data from other sectors. We expect that in the future we're going to have a much better picture of nursing human resources.

You also asked the question about long-term disability and nurses' health. I wanted to let you know that I work very closely with the office of nursing policy with Health Canada in the federal government. The chief executive nurse with the office of nursing policy is specifically doing research with the Institute for Work and Health on nurses' health. That kind of information we expect to have later this year.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that, and I hope it will be public. My concerns are very real. We have an acute nursing shortage. When we hear about the numbers of nurses who are leaving on long-term disability being as high as 30 a month compared to five or six before, that's directly related to workload and to the stress that nurses are working under. It also has to do with the fact that there are no regulations for minimum nursing staff in long-term care and the kind of workload people are carrying in nursing home facilities. I'm going to leave that for another time.

But we know that even where there are dollars, in home care for example, to hire nurses, many agencies are not able to find the nurses because of the nursing shortage. I think it will probably use up the time before the vote today. I support the degree entry for nursing, but I am really concerned about how much the shortage is going to be aggravated between now and the time we start graduating significant numbers of degree RNs.

I know there are proposals to take new entrants into colleges. I believe we need to be training new nurses now. We can't wait. I also understand that college proposals for increased numbers of nurses are not being considered by the ministry. I understand that there are some colleges that are not taking any new entrants for nurses at all. If this happens prior to the transition plans being worked out, we're going to have a dreadful shortage.

What is the ministry doing to make sure that we are not only taking as many but taking more entrants into nursing and that we're going to perhaps have an accelerated 12-month program in order to make sure we don't have a period of time—not to raise sore point—as we did with radiation therapists, when there was a restructuring and we had a whole year with no graduates at all? We can't afford that in nursing.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just very briefly, and I will let Ms MacMillan continue, you've identified an issue that is of concern to all of the provinces and territories, and that is that we simply do not have a sufficient, large enough supply of health professionals, whether it comes to physicians, nurses, radiation therapists or many others. We've actually struck a task force at the national level to address the issue, because there's no point in us taking nurses from another province, as is happening, or people leaving us. We are hoping to develop a national strategy.

But certainly I'll let either George Zegarac or Kathleen MacMillan respond to the issue of ensuring that we have an adequate supply.

**Mrs McLeod:** Let me ask it very specifically, then, in number terms. What are the plans to increase the numbers of entrants to nursing as of next September? How many increased this September? What are the plans to increase nursing entrants as of this September in the province of Ontario? I know there's a nation-wide problem. I don't believe we should be poaching from other provinces. I think there's a UN resolution against poaching health care professionals from other countries, as in fact we've been doing with radiation therapists. I'm not advocating that. That's why I think it's absolutely crucial that we see today the plans that are in place to increase the numbers of training spots, whether it's for nurses, physicians, specialists or radiation therapists.

**Ms MacMillan:** In our plan for creating the collaborative college-university program, we've been planning for enrolment of 3,300 registered nursing students. Then there are additional numbers of practical nursing students. I didn't bring those numbers with me, but I can provide you with what we were planning for in the enrolment.

**Mrs McLeod:** But the collaborative program doesn't kick in until 2005.

**Ms MacMillan:** No, that starts September 1, 2001.

**Mrs McLeod:** In terms of increased numbers?

**Ms MacMillan:** In terms of the increased numbers. We're trying to plan for the current attrition rate that we have in the program. We're trying to plan for bringing in about 3,300 students in the collaborative program. That's what we've been planning our funding around. With the current attrition rates, we're anticipating that for registered nurses we would be graduating about 2,600 students if we get 3,300 enrolled, and that would be an increase of about 500 over our current enrolment rate and our current graduation rate.

What we are also doing, though, as I pointed out, is working very closely with the nursing research unit to do ongoing assessments of enrolment, attrition, graduation and planning so that we're anticipating appropriately the number of nurses that we need for the future. There will be graduates in the year 2004. It will be a reduced number, and we also want to plan for that to make sure that it's not a hugely reduced number, because we do have a cohort of graduates coming from the universities that year, from the generic university programs.

They are requesting increased seats in practical nursing. As part of the national strategy that the minister indicated, we are planning for at least a 10% increase, because that's been the guideline across the country.

But I think the most important thing, with respect, is that we want to use the data that we have at hand through the nursing research unit for intelligent planning, which we have not been able—

**Mrs McLeod:** I only have a minute; the bell is ringing for the vote. Is there any point in time when the numbers of graduates will be reduced by the numbers of people

who would have graduated from a college program? You know what I'm saying?

**Ms MacMillan:** No.

**Mrs McLeod:** So the numbers will never show a decline in terms of graduates. They'll always show a steady increase?

**Ms MacMillan:** Well, no. In the year 2004, as I indicated, there will be no college graduates but there will be graduates from the university sector, and we need

to plan—suggestions such as you had about 12-month programs etc—to make up for that.

**The Vice-Chair:** That concludes the official opposition time. There's a vote, and I presume we can adjourn until tomorrow because we only have 10 minutes here. So the estimates are adjourned until tomorrow at 3:30.

*The committee adjourned at 1751.*









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**Mercredi 25 octobre 2000**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Health and Long-Term  
Care

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 25 October 2000

Mercredi 25 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1542 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
AND LONG-TERM CARE

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** Thank you all for attending. We will commence this meeting. We now turn to the third party in our rotation for 20 minutes.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** We will be proceeding with some questions with respect to northern cancer patients. I'm going to turn that over to Ms Martel. But before I do, I have one totally unrelated budget item question that I'd like to ask and get out of the way.

With respect to page 69, the Ontario drug benefit program operating cost, you'll see the transfer payments are roughly \$1.4 billion. I wonder if you could provide me with a breakdown of what that covers. Most particularly, I'd like to know the estimated amount for payment for the Ontario Trillium plan. Do you have the Trillium number available today? Perhaps someone could look for that.

**Ms Michelle DiEmanuele:** I'm pretty sure we can give that to you.

**Ms Lankin:** We'll proceed with the other questions, and if you could give that to me before the end of this 20 minutes, I'd appreciate that.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms Lankin:** Thank you. Mr Chairman, I'll turn it over to Ms Martel at this point.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Minister, I'm here today because I continue to be concerned about your government's ongoing discrimination against cancer patients from northern Ontario, and I have some questions in that regard.

The first goes back to when the program was begun in April 1999, when your government decided it would fund 100% of the cost for southern Ontario cancer patients travelling for care in the north or in the States—100% of their food, travel and accommodation. Can you tell me what the rationale was for the government to agree to do that?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** First of all, I think we need to clearly put on the record the fact that we have two distinct and separate travel grant programs. We have the northern health travel grant, which is a permanent program, as

opposed to the cancer care referral program, which is a temporary program. The northern health travel grant was initiated under the Liberals. It was a program you were critical of and which you had an opportunity to improve when you were in office. At the present time, we are reviewing it. But it's also a program that is not available to people in southern Ontario.

At the present time, Cancer Care Ontario has determined that we don't have the capacity in Ontario to treat all our radiation patients who have prostate and breast cancer. They have provided funding to those individuals in order that they can access treatment within the appropriate waiting time either in northern Ontario or in the United States. So it is a Cancer Care Ontario program, it is temporary and it is a program to which all people in the province have access. It is equally accessible to all who need it, if they suffer from breast or prostate cancer and need radiation within a certain time.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, you said this is a Cancer Care Ontario program. Isn't it true your that government is fully funding 100% of these costs to these patients?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As you know, Cancer Care Ontario is an agency that has been set up by the provincial government. It is an agency that makes decisions regarding the treatment and programs for cancer patients in the province. Yes, the funding that supports Cancer Care Ontario is taxpayer money. That's how the money is provided to Cancer Care Ontario.

**Ms Martel:** If I might, Minister, this is a special allocation to Cancer Care Ontario to pay 100% of these costs for patients to travel; it's not out of Cancer Care Ontario's base budget that they receive from you. Is that correct?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As you know, Cancer Care Ontario submits to the government requests for funding on an ongoing basis. Obviously, since we have asked them to assume responsibility for the delivery and planning of cancer programs, we are the ones who consider the requests and make the response.

**Ms Martel:** It's clear it is a special allocation, and Dr McGowan from Cancer Care Ontario confirmed that for the public accounts committee in February. My question was, though, what was the rationale for the government to agree to make a special allocation to Cancer Care Ontario in order for this program to occur?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think we've said on many occasions—in fact I said it in my introductory remarks,



Ms Martel—that it is on the best advice of Cancer Care Ontario. It is health professionals who have determined that we don't have the capacity within Ontario to treat, within the appropriate time, people who need radiation treatment and who suffer from prostate and breast cancer. It was based on their recommendation. These are clinical decisions that have been made by Cancer Care Ontario; they're not political decisions. Based on their recommendation that these people receive services within the designated time period, they have recommended that these people be provided with treatment in other centres in Ontario where there's space or that they travel to the United States. They are the ones who have made the recommendation that there be reimbursement.

**Ms Martel:** I'm not questioning the medical decision. I am asking for the government's rationale for the financial decision, ie, the decision to financially provide for 100% of the cost for these patients to travel. What was the government's rationale for agreeing to provide those finances?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask Les Levin, who is our senior cancer policy adviser within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to give you further information, Ms Martel.

**Ms Lankin:** If I may, Minister, the question is the government's political decision, the cabinet decision. With a lot of respect to Mr Levin—I don't mean at all to suggest he doesn't know a lot about the structure of cancer services—I'm asking, and Ms Martel is asking, what the political decision and rationale were for this.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I appreciate your attempts to help Ms Martel, Ms Lankin. However, this is not—I repeat—this is not a political decision. This was a medical decision. That's why I believe it is very important that Mr Levin have the opportunity to respond as to why we are re-referring.

**Ms Martel:** With all due respect to Dr Levin, who was before our public accounts committee and has heard me go on about this before, Minister, the question is a political one. Your government, your cabinet, made a decision to provide 100% of the finances for this scheme to occur. That's not a medical decision. It's a financial decision. You had to find the funds to do it and you agreed to do so, and what I want to know is, what was the government's rationale for agreeing to provide 100% of the funds to do so? You could have paid nothing, but you chose to agree to pay 100%. Why?

1550

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, I just repeat that these were based on medical decisions and recommendations that were forthcoming from Cancer Care Ontario. If you are obviously not interested in hearing the medical reasons as to why these recommendations were made, it's difficult to make a response. But Dr Levin is here. He's prepared to as fully as possible respond and give you information that was used to make the decision to accept this recommendation. I ask Dr Levin to provide the information.

**Ms Martel:** I'm sorry. If I might, Minister, it's not a medical decision. So let me ask it this way: did the gov-

ernment agree to fully fund 100% of the costs because you were concerned that these cancer patients had to travel far from home for cancer care?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I just repeat, Ms Martel, this was based on medical decisions and recommendations and, again, without providing Mr Levin with the opportunity to indicate why the decision was made to re-refer cancer patients, obviously the information that I think would be beneficial in helping you understand the decision will not be available to you.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, I'm going to ask you one more time to answer the question that has been put to you. I do believe that both Ms Martel and myself and anyone else who has been observing this issue understands the medical reasons that a re-referral program was put in place, and the fact that a person is re-referred to cancer care where it is available may be and is being based on a medical decision. That has nothing to do with why the government decided to compensate someone for their travel costs once they had been re-referred. That is a financial decision. It is not, with all due respect, a medical decision. The fact that they have been re-referred is one thing. The fact that the government cabinet decided to compensate them for travel costs is another. Could you answer why you chose to accept a proposal to compensate people for those travel costs once they had been medically re-referred?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I simply repeat, this was a medical decision that was made. Obviously, it was made after very careful consideration by the Cancer Care Ontario staff and leaders and, based on the information and the recommendations that came forward, we accepted the recommendation in order to ensure that the people in the province of Ontario could receive radiation treatment within the appropriate period of time and that they would be at least provided with the option of going elsewhere to access the radiation treatment they needed. So, again, it was medical decision and recommendations based on those medical decisions.

**Ms Martel:** If I might, Mr Chair, let me ask Dr Levin, then. Sir, can you tell me, what was the financial decision that was made by cabinet or by your minister to fully fund the cost for these patients who were re-referred?

**Dr Les Levin:** I would be happy to share with you the basis for the decision that was conveyed to us by Cancer Care Ontario at the time. As you will know, Cancer Care Ontario revealed to us the extent of the waiting list for patients requiring radiation treatment. In about November 1998 they realized that the situation required some remedial action.

**Ms Lankin:** I think we know that, Dr Levin.

**Dr Levin:** OK. They requested that we comply with a standard which had been set up by the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncologists. Recognizing the extent of the problem, my understanding is that Cancer Care Ontario wished to place no impediment in the way of any people who wished to take the option of travelling elsewhere for their treatment, and that was the basis on which I believe this decision was made.

**Ms Lankin:** Dr Levin, could I just ask you by extension, then—the cost of travel to a distant place was viewed as a potential impediment to people seeking care in a timely fashion.

**Dr Levin:** No. The extent of the problem was such that they wished to make it easy and not place any impediments whatsoever in the way of people who wished to accept that option. I think it's also important to look at this in the context of the other travel arrangements that are unique to cancer patients in Ontario. As you no doubt know, the Canadian Cancer Society does offer cancer patients supplements to the existing northern health travel grant when they travel in the north.

Furthermore, because cancer patients are travelling for ambulatory treatment for very prolonged periods of time, patients in Ontario who travel are almost always given access to accommodation. Therefore, it was necessary to make sure that the accommodation costs of patients travelling to the United States were covered. I believe that the only difference between patients travelling in Ontario and those who are being referred to the United States was that their meals costs were covered at \$40 per diem for those who were travelling to the United States. I'm not sure of the basis for that decision. I believe the discounted Canadian dollar might have had something to do with that.

**Ms Martel:** If I might, you said “impediment,” and I'm going to assume that means a financial impediment for cancer patients to seek cancer treatment somewhere else. That is the same situation that faces northern cancer patients every day when they have to travel far from home to go to Sudbury or Thunder Bay to receive cancer care or if they have to leave the north altogether. There is absolutely no difference with respect to the government decision made to deal with southern Ontario patients and the decision the government should make with respect to cancer patients who suffer now in the north because they have to go so far to get treatment.

I didn't expect you to answer, because the question really was for the minister, and it's for the political folks to answer.

Let me ask the minister this question, though. You promised in the House on May 8 that you would do a review of this inequity, and we are still waiting for this five months later. I finally filed a freedom of information request on September 13 and I have been told that it's going to take until November 14 to complete consultations with respect to my request. Can you tell me, Minister, is this report done? I surely believe that it is.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You've certainly heard me speak and you've heard the Premier say that we're doing a very comprehensive review of our travel grant program. It would be our hope that that comprehensive review would be completed this fall, and then the information would be provided to you.

**Ms Martel:** It was my understanding that the northern health office has completed some work that was probably done by the end of June which would have responded directly to this issue of inequity. Can you tell this com-

mittee whether work done by Raymond Pong and others is actually complete?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As I say, we're doing a very comprehensive review of the travel grant programs. As you've indicated yourself, we have not only the permanent northern health travel grant program but we also have this temporary re-referral program that is supported and funded by Cancer Care Ontario. So we believe it's prudent to do the comprehensive review.

**Ms Martel:** I think Mr Raymond Pong has done a report on this issue. Would you table that with the committee as a separate addendum?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Once the information is ready, we'll be in a position to share all of that information with you.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, you announced several weeks ago that you're going to send more southern Ontario cancer patients away for treatment. You've asked CCO for an estimate of the costs to do so. Can you tell the committee if you've asked CCO to include the cost to fully fund northern cancer patients too in that estimate?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, we did not ask Cancer Care Ontario to send more patients elsewhere. We understand that they are preparing proposals, so any information regarding additional re-referral of patients has come from Cancer Care Ontario and I understand that they may be preparing such a proposal for us, which I have not yet received.

**1600**

**Ms Martel:** Minister, it was my understanding that your ministry specifically asked CCO for the estimate of the cost to send more southern Ontario cancer patients away for treatment, both the volume—sheer numbers—and the cost to pay 100% of their travel to do so. What I am asking you is, given that that is happening, have you also asked them to include the cost to fully fund northern cancer patients, too?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I understand that what's happening is that Cancer Care Ontario is in the process of preparing information for us that would relate to further expansion of the travel program. I have not received the program. I don't know if Mr Levin has any additional information, but I don't have the information that is being or has been prepared.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, on several occasions you've said this re-referral program and the government's 100% funding of it is temporary. Can you tell me your definition of “temporary”?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, this program won't be going on for 10 years or five years. We certainly hope that within the next couple of years, obviously based on the advice and the information that we receive from Cancer Care Ontario, that we'll be in a position to terminate it. I think we'd all like to be able to say, Ms Martel, that next week or next month or the beginning of 2001, we would have the appropriate number of radiation therapists here, the oncologists, the physicists, and that we would be able to treat everyone in our own province, but unfortunately, as you know, that's not the case.



It's not the case in Ontario, and it's not the case in many of the other provinces, as well. We are finding ourselves in a situation, because of a shortage of human resources, that we simply don't have the human resources to provide all of the radiation in the province. But, as I say, we'd like to, and would encourage Cancer Care Ontario to take every step possible to make sure that they do everything possible to ensure that people could receive all treatment in this province. That's our objective.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, the problem I have is that Cancer Care Ontario was before the public accounts committee in February and told us then that this program would go about two and a half years. That was before the recent announcement of about two weeks ago that the waiting list for some of this treatment was the longest ever, so I expect that we are well beyond two and a half years.

The problem I have with that is that you're going to continue to pay 100% of the costs for southern Ontario cancer patients to access care, which you should do and I agree with, and at the same time you're only going to give northern Ontario cancer patients partial travel costs, 30 cents a kilometre one-way if they travel more than 100 kilometres, one-way, for cancer care.

That discrimination just can't go on that long. What will it take for your government to understand the financial burden that you are placing on northern Ontario cancer patients too, who also have to travel very far from home every day to get care? What's it going to take for us to get you to understand that that situation has to be fixed?

**The Chair:** Ms Martel, I'm sorry, your time is up. Minister, perhaps in the next round you can provide an answer to that.

We now turn to the government caucus and to Mr Mazzilli.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Minister, just continuing on that, in relation to cancer, certainly there have been plenty of new stories that outline and highlight the waiting lists in Ontario for cancer treatment. We didn't get into this problem overnight, and somehow most of us would feel that governments would plan for these trends in our aging population, and diseases.

Having said that, what is our government doing to ensure that Ontarians can receive timely treatment in Ontario? Perhaps, to explain that, you want to refer part of the question to Dr Levin to outline how we got into this in the first place.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'd be pleased to respond, Mr Mazzilli. Unfortunately, this has been, as are many of the health problems, of long standing, and I would indicate that it's not unique just to the province of Ontario. I think for a long, long time there was not a lot of renewal and restructuring within the health system. I think there were responses made to situations that were certainly of an ad hoc nature, but there was no comprehensive long-range planning taking place. In many respects, that's now being undertaken not only by us in the province of Ontario but by other governments throughout Canada as well in the provinces and the territories.

Specifically speaking to cancer, since 1995 we have become aware of the fact that as the population grows and ages, so does the incidence of cancer. The incidence of cancer is increasing by about 3% per year. Since 1995, we have consulted with stakeholders and patients, those who have knowledge of the system, and we have already invested over \$160 million into cancer services and cancer care.

I would like to share with you the other statistic. The reason we don't have the capacity for the radiation therapy is that it really had not been expected that the number of people who needed therapy would increase as much as they have. The number of patients receiving radiation therapy has actually increased by 25% since 1995. Since we have become aware of the situation as it relates to cancer in Ontario, we have undertaken several steps. Number one, we set up Cancer Care Ontario in order that they could coordinate standards and guidelines for the treatment of patients. We have increased their funding by 28% since 1997 and are constructing new cancer facilities in St Catharines, Sault Ste Marie, Kitchener, Mississauga and also in Durham. We are working very co-operatively with Cancer Care Ontario in order that we can address the needs and plan for the long term.

Unfortunately I think it's the long term that has been neglected. We need to make sure that not only can we respond to needs today but into the future. I'll let Dr Levin deal with what has happened and what we hope to see happen.

**Dr Levin:** Just by way of background, radiation treatment is an extraordinarily complex modality. It is likened to a hydraulic system with changes in indication, staffing and machine capacity all impacting on the delivery of this highly complex and highly technical modality.

We all wish we were wise in retrospect, in terms of human resource planning in particular, and we share that with other jurisdictions, as the minister alluded to, in Canada, and also in other countries. The truth of the matter is that there are very few jurisdictions internationally that are able to pinpoint with precision the human resource needs for many components of health care.

When you have a complex modality like radiation treatment to deal with, any deficiencies in the system are going to create backlogs in that particular system. When you manage to resolve one problem, the hydraulic system kicks in and you have another problem with respect to delivery. Despite that, I believe that we are making fairly considerable inroads within the province.

The standard of a four-week wait time for radiation treatment—that's from the point of referral by a surgeon to beginning radiation treatment—was set by the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncologists. Cancer Care Ontario gave us an interim standard of eight weeks while we ramped up capacity in the province and sent patients to other parts of the province or, as need be, out of the country, to get us down to the eight-week standard.

The extent of the waiting problem was first brought to our attention in November 1998. In January 1999, 25%



of patients were being treated within the four-week standard. By June 2000 it had gone up from 25% to 38%. In January 1999, 60% were being treated within eight weeks and, as of June 2000, that's gone up to 73%. So I think we're seeing quite considerable movement in terms of the throughput and the efficiency of treating these patients.

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We have a 10-point plan, which I think is already beginning to show some promise, which we implemented in March 1999. We made the necessary salary and workload standard adjustments that were recommended to us by the professions and by Cancer Care Ontario in March 1999. We put in place two of the largest training programs ever for radiation therapists and medical physicists. That is where we're going to reap the most benefit in the medium to long term, by training up our own staff to take care of radiation services. We have very good accruals to those programs.

We funded an ambitious national-international recruitment effort. Cancer Care Ontario have done I think a sterling job in attracting people to this province to help us address our immediate problems.

We knew in April 1999 that there would a problem with regard to capacity in the short term, and that is why the out-of-country referral program was approved, to help us off-load the immediate problem while we were ramping up capacity in the province, which is the desired way of dealing with this problem.

We approved a cost-per-case funding arrangement for radiation treatment. I think that is extremely important. What it means is that Cancer Care Ontario and the Princess Margaret Hospital can treat any number of patients a year and they know they're going to be reimbursed for that by way of year-end reconciliation. There are no financial obstacles for either of these agencies to treat as many cancer patients as they wish.

We struck a cancer human resources committee which is beginning to plan for our future needs and to tie those needs to the training programs, especially radiation therapy and medical physics.

We've worked with smart systems in the Ministry of Health to develop an electronic tracking system that allows us to detect pressures in access to cancer surgery, radiation treatment and systemic treatment, and we're through the first phase of that development. Hopefully we can bring that to fruition within 12 months. That's quite a complicated system.

We provided \$4.4 million to Princess Margaret Hospital in May 1999 to allow them to make adjustments to their treatment machines and, by doing that, to increase throughput. As a result of that one initiative, they increased the number of cancer patients treated at the Princess Margaret Hospital by 10%, which is a huge number, given the complexities of radiation treatment.

The minister has alluded to the money that has been allocated for development of new radiation treatment centres in Kitchener, Oshawa and Mississauga. We also have a very bold initiative which is recommended by

Cancer Care Ontario. We are looking at a single-machine centre in Sault Ste Marie. That is a bold initiative. We are prepared to provide funding for that. That might change the way radiation treatment is ultimately delivered in the province, moving away from mega cancer centres to the smaller cancer centres and bringing treatment much closer to home for patients.

Finally, the Ministry of Health has been meeting with both Cancer Care Ontario and the Princess Margaret Hospital to look at ways in which we can ensure that the existing complement of machines is replaced according to a predetermined schedule in the future.

That 10-point plan will hopefully deal with our problems in the medium to long term.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** Minister, last spring it came to light that the long-term-care units in Ontario have never been properly inspected on a yearly basis. I understand we have taken steps in order to ensure that those inspections do take place on an annual basis. I wonder if you could tell the committee what those steps are and where that program is at the current time, as to its coming to fruition.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'd be pleased to respond to the question, Mr Chudleigh. Our government has indicated that we are committed to very high quality standards in all of our long-term-care facilities in the province of Ontario. There are approximately 536 facilities. About 510 of those are permanent, and the others, as you know, are interim long-term-care bed facilities.

Late last year I asked the deputy to do a review to ascertain whether there had been annual reviews done of the long-term-care facilities in this province in the past and in the present. I was informed by the deputy that unfortunately the long-term-care facilities had not, on an ongoing basis, or ever, been all receiving annual reviews.

I then asked the deputy to prepare for us an action plan to ensure that all long-term-care facilities in the province—nursing homes and homes for the aged—would in future receive annual reviews. I'm very pleased to say that on July 5, 2000, I announced a plan of action which would ensure that for the first time in the history of this province an annual review would be done in every long-term-care facility. We also announced at that time an additional \$860,000. Also, we have hired additional compliance advisers.

The action plan included, first of all, a very aggressive tracking system to ensure that the new annual reviews are on track and that corrective action is taking place. I think that is important, that there be a tracking system.

Also, there is now a province-wide reporting process to provide updated information on the reviews. I am also pleased to say that there were five new compliance advisers who were hired permanently to perform this unprecedented task of making sure that each facility would receive an annual review.

I can assure you that we are on track. The ministry has informed me that since July 5, 2000, they have completed more than 53% of the annual reviews, up until September 30, 2000. I have every confidence that by March 31,

2001, there will be complete compliance with the action plan provided to me by the deputy, and that not only this year, but every year thereafter we will see an annual review of our long-term care facilities, our homes for the aged and our nursing homes.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Minister, permit me just to ramble one little bit more.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** You've only got one minute.

**Mr Stewart:** I've only got one minute? I certainly can't ramble in one minute, to say the least, so I'll ask my question the next time around.

If I've only got a minute, I just want to make a couple of comments about the achievements and the dollars that have gone into various areas in my—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Stewart, I made a mistake. You've got about five minutes.

**Mr Stewart:** Then I can ramble a little bit more. That's great to hear.

Anyway, it's to try to show the dollars going into these areas. Certainly rural Ontario is getting a good number of those, because the ministry has identified the need in some of these small communities.

Yet if I also look at the larger communities, they'll be contributing \$107 million for the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, to build a new acute care hospital, and I think that's absolutely tremendous. In Toronto, the ministry has approved capital projects totalling \$563 million to accomplish restructuring and address redevelopment pressures.

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But there's another pressure out there, and I guess it's probably more common in rural Ontario than it is in some of the larger centres, and that is the shortage of doctors. The area I represent is one of them. Communities like Havelock, Belmont, Bethune and Keene are small villages which over the last many, many years have had a doctor. Citizens in the rural area have to realize that the day of having a doctor at every crossroads is not going to happen. They've got to realize that. But there are other areas where the distance to travel is a long way.

The opposition would have us believe we have done nothing to address this important issue. I understand it was the previous government that reduced the number of medical school enrolment positions in Ontario which has helped to amplify the current shortage. Could you please detail some of the initiatives our government has done regarding the recruitment and the retaining of physicians in Ontario?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** There was a decision made in 1992, and it was made actually throughout Canada, to reduce the medical school enrolment by 10%. The government of the day made that decision in the province of Ontario as well.

However, we have worked very diligently, beginning with Mr Wilson, who was the minister in 1995, in recognizing that we need an appropriate supply of physicians, appropriate distribution and an appropriate mix. We have identified in particular that there is a great deal to do in

the north and in the rural part of this province. I am very pleased to say there have been many initiatives in the north and the rural part of the province to attract and encourage doctors. First of all, \$90 million was provided to help over 60 small hospitals with physician coverage in emergency rooms. That certainly was significant.

There was as the joint OMA-Ministry of Health agreement for 20 northern underserved communities to attract doctors. They were provided with a \$10,000 retention bonus if they stayed for three years, double stipends for specialty services, a guaranteed base salary, and \$60,000 for overhead costs. Also, they have been provided with a 70-hour sessional fee for physicians who work nights, weekends and holidays in emergency departments in northern hospitals. There were 78 hospitals in the province eligible for that.

**The Vice-Chair:** I think your time has about run out. Maybe you could put that in a written statement later on.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** My question for the minister concerns the RFP process for CCACs. I'd like the minister to describe what kind of review she's planning to undertake and exactly why the review. My understanding is that there is an uneven playing field for those who are participating in the bidding process. Could you comment on the effect pay equity legislation has had on these organizations which are submitting a bid to an RFP for CCACs and are not able to submit the same kind of bid, simply because the wage rate is so much higher due to pay equity and there's no compensation from the government in that regard? Apparently they've come forward many times to the government with this issue and it hasn't been addressed yet. I'd like to know why the review and what you feel the problem with the RFP is, and what you're prepared to do to either eliminate the competitive model all together, to rescind it, to change it, what changes and in what area?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Our government is very strongly committed to ensuring that we have high-quality community care services available to all Ontarians. The objectives of the program review are, first, to examine how services are being obtained and delivered across the province; second, to identify the program's strengths and opportunities for improvement; and third, to highlight the issues which are going to require some further investigation, such as what you have just referred to, the request for proposals.

I would call on Mary Kardos Burton to give you some additional details as to the review.

**Mrs Mary Kardos Burton:** Thank you very much, Minister. I am Mary Kardos Burton, executive director of health care programs.

You asked about the RFP process. I think it's important to point out that the process is relatively new. It's only been in place since 1997. I think that we need more experience with it in terms of looking at how effective it is.

In terms of what we've done in the ministry, we've provided extensive training to CCACs in contract management so that they can ensure that there's a strong



accountability mechanism. We've also got a managed competition stakeholder committee that actually looks at the practices that are in place. As the minister said, we have a program review in place and we're expecting the results this fall.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** Could I ask you to comment on the pay equity issue and how you feel this inequity disserves those who are submitting a bid?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** There are operational issues that have been identified by CCACs. We're certainly looking at those operational issues.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Is it your intent that you would then pay, or up what you are paying, in order to compensate for pay equity?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Every issue that's been identified as a financial issue with the CCACs, certainly our regional offices have looked at them and they have identified some operational issues in terms of the process.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Is it an issue through the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Health?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The Ministry of Health is working with the CCACs. CCACs are private organizations as well and they're managing their own, but they have raised issues with us. We are working with them to see whether we can look at their operational issues.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Some of the CCACs are undergoing their second round now of the RFP process because the contract length is three years. Some feel that's too short. The ramp-up time gives them maybe one and a half years full up once they've gotten going. That's been the experience in that first round.

What would you say constitutes a breach of contract when a company is delivering service and is not able to meet the terms of the contract for a variety of reasons like, they didn't exist in the community before they won the bid; there's a nursing shortage; and those companies are not taking the patients they're being sent by the CCAC, which would obviously be viewed as a breach of contract? How long would you say before the CCAC should get rid of the company that's not obliging the contract they've signed?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The CCACs are responsible for working with the providers they have chosen I think in terms of ensuring that the expectations they outlined are being met.

From a provincial perspective the process has been in place since 1997, and we are working with the CCACs. I think the program review will certainly be informing us this fall in terms of whether there can be improvements to the system.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Given the nature of the high level of training you just spoke of that you're giving the CCACs to go through this contract process, what would you suggest to the CCACs that they do when there are breaches of contract of this nature?

Apparently they are right across the board in Ontario, not just in my own community, where companies are simply not meeting their obligations and are saying no to services when the call comes to take on a patient. The

company says, "I have no nurse to send." The company says, "I simply can't do it. I don't have anyone on the night shift. I don't have an ostomy expert."

For all of the above reasons and more, they are not giving service—obviously a breach. There are many issues like nursing shortages that are not up to a company to solve but are much larger issues. What advice do you give as the trainer in instructing CCACs in how this model has to be delivered? What would you tell them?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Our priority is that service needs are met. I think that from a ministry perspective, our regional offices are working with the CCACs, they are monitoring the situation, and certainly any issues that need to be dealt with on a province-wide basis will be dealt with.

**Mrs Pupatello:** There was an issue in the RFP process in the first round that dealt with the weighting given to the RFP on quality versus price. There was a strong feeling that there were a number of issues around companies having no history of service delivery, where other organizations had been around for 100 years and had a significant history in delivery of service, and that those qualitative issues weren't addressed by the RFP. In fact, major organizations like the VON are withdrawn from that nursing service, for example, where a new company, never before in a community, was able to win a bid and then had to start up operation with no nursing staff.

In many examples, like in my own community, the nurses who were employed by VON, for example, did not just move over to the new company. The new company was left with no nurses to provide the service that they signed a contract to provide.

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In that instance, when would you say a contract is breached and the CCAC must do a review to ensure the services are met? In fact, we have met patients where nurses simply did not arrive at the home once they were released from the hospital.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** You asked about the RFP process. It's conducted to compare service provider organizations on a number of criteria. It's designed so that it's fair and open. You asked in terms of the percentages: 75% is quality and 25% is price in the evaluation process.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Is that a changed figure that you're giving?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** No.

**Mrs Pupatello:** It was 80-20. There's written material that indicated it was 80-20. Is it now 75-25 in the new round?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** My understanding is that it's 75-25, but we'd be happy to verify that for you.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Could you speak to breach of contract and what in the ministry's view would be a breach of contract when a company cannot provide the service for a myriad of reasons? I mentioned some that it's not up to a company to solve, like if they can't find nurses to hire.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** In response to your question, obviously we have to remember that CCACs have



reached an agreement with a provider and it's up to them to make the determinations as to what would constitute a breach of contract. They have the legal responsibility and they have the independence to make those decisions.

**Mrs Papatello:** As the minister might know, we've been calling for standards in home care since 1997 and since the CCACs were created because there are currently no standards in the delivery of service in this area. For example, an individual who needs personal grooming or some level of home care and lives in the city of Windsor doesn't necessarily get it as a patient, but if he were to move to Chatham he would get it. The standards there are that the Chatham CCAC would deliver that service, but not the Windsor-Essex CCAC, because there is a difference in standards. This is the case across the board in Ontario. Depending on where you live, it's up to the will of that board of directors of the CCAC to determine how best they will deliver those services. So it does come back to the provincial government to set those standards and say what a patient is entitled to in this province in terms of home care.

As the minister is aware, we've lost 5,000 beds out of our hospitals. Patients, doctors and hospitals all acknowledge that patients are moved out of hospitals much more quickly than ever before, and everyone acknowledges, including the former minister of long-term care, that patients are out sicker and quicker. Mr Jackson has that on the record as well.

What that means is that the delivery of home care to patients is much more acute than ever before, so nursing demands are higher. For example, the Windsor CCAC—and this is the same in many of the CCACs—the contracts they're having to meet are actually 110% in volume of what they had sent out in the bidding process, and yet the funding level has only increased by 2%. So there is an 8% gap of delivery of service under the contract. They can't possibly meet the requests for service.

That, coupled with a significant shortage of nurses in the home care field for a whole variety of reasons: the wage gap, for example, which is historic—people who worked in home care enjoyed the field, so the price differential and wage didn't seem to be as much of an issue. Now the view is that home care conditions for nursing, for example, are so poor that wages are an issue. I would ask the minister to speak to any discussions you've had or considerations you may be giving to address the issue of wages. Are you prepared to set the bar at a different level for nursing, for example?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think your questions are valid and good ones. I think it's important to note that the issue of home care is one that is being addressed by every government in Canada. Originally the federal government had wanted to provide some leadership in establishing some national standards regarding level of care, and I personally support that. For whatever reason, we haven't seen that happening.

At the present time, people in this province are receiving per capita spending on home care to the tune of \$128. That is the most that's being spent anywhere in

Canada. Obviously, someone who is living elsewhere is not receiving the same type of support for home care. I think we need to be taking a look at standards; I think we need to be taking a look at consistent levels of care. I would hope the review would address that.

As you know, we have set aside a commitment to make available \$551 million for community services by the year 2004. We're well on our way to getting there. We've already invested more than \$250 million. We want to ensure that everyone in this province, no matter where they live, has the same type of access. We're also concerned about the issue of—

**Mrs Papatello:** Minister, while you are on that point, if I may, just on that same issue: could you turn to page 128 of the estimates book and tell me, then, why the interim actuals are so significantly lower than the estimates for community support services, which you just mentioned you plan to increase; and on that same note, why the area of homemaking services is so significantly lower in the interim actuals than you had in the estimates? That's vote 1406-3. You seem to be headed in the wrong direction in terms of your figures, based on what you've just said is your intent.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would call upon Ms Burton to respond specifically.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Can you just go over exactly which one you were asking—

**Mrs Papatello:** Page 128, if you go down to homemaking services, community support services, the interim actual of \$423,954,858 is significantly less than \$469 million, which was the estimate. The line directly below it, \$131 million, is significantly lower than the \$159 million. The ministry then is significantly behind in increasing. If the minister's statement is true and you're trying to head in the other direction, then you're actually spending less.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** I think that part of the spending is less because we've been restructuring some of our programs internally. There is certainly no intention to spend less than that.

**Mrs Papatello:** That internal reallocation is only accounting for—well, none of that is being attributed to those two lines, if you look on page 129.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** I think I'll ask the director of finance and information management, John McKinley, to speak specifically to the areas that you're raising.

**Mrs Papatello:** While he takes his seat, I'll just put on the record that it's inconceivable that you could spend less in the area of homemaking or support in the community in this day and age, when you have so many more patients being sent home quicker and sicker, as was acknowledged by the former minister of long-term care in the last term. With all of that, with the political discussion that's been made, the numbers do not bear out that you are in fact spending more.

**Mr John McKinley:** I'm John McKinley, Ministry of Health, director of finance and information management. The issue we are seeing here is that we have had tremendous growth in the amount of money being made

available for community services in both the CCACs and community support services over the last few years.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Does that speak to the difference between the \$469 million and the \$423 million interim actuals?

**Mr McKinley:** This area is very interrelated. The programs that you see in community support services, in support of housing and all of those things are very interrelated in the agencies that provide services for those clients.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Both of those lines are underspent, according to your documents here.

**Mr McKinley:** Yes. They are underspent. This is a community development process that we're going through too in terms of developing more and more services for those communities.

**Mrs Pupatello:** If I may, with respect: the government is constantly making announcements about more money being available to CCACs, for example. We know on the ground that CCACs are having to pay out in excess of 100% of the contracts they've signed and we know that the funding made available to those individual CCACs is not augmented by the same percentage—so 110% of the contract versus an inclusive 2%. We know there are deficits and that the government historically has had to pay out at the end of each year some deficit levels for CCACs. That's not explaining the decrease in funding here on page 128.

**Ms Kardon Burton:** The \$469 million to the \$423 million specifically is as a result of shift to professional services and recovery.

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**Mr McKinley:** In actual fact, if you look at the difference in the 664, those two lines, the 664 and the 469 are both services that are provided through the CCACs. In their activity, they have shifted from having more home-making services to having more professional services, and that reflects in—

**Mrs Pupatello:** There's a significant difference in the figure that she just mentioned was shifted to professional services. It still doesn't account for the wide difference in spending in those two lines. What does that mean? I think I understand what homemaking services are, so when they're shifted to professional, what does that mean exactly?

**Mr McKinley:** The professional services in the nursing or the physio or the OT.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Therapy.

**Mr McKinley:** Therapy services in the home.

**Mrs Pupatello:** The augmentation of the actual versus the estimate doesn't account for the difference in the homemaking and community support.

**Mr McKinley:** No. As I say, we have not been able to spend all of the money we have in those areas. It's not through a conscious effort of the government to slow it down; it's a matter of being able to have the services provided by the agencies.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Are you suggesting, then, that the RFP process is not working and you're still going to the second round of RFPs with a number of these agencies?

**Mr McKinley:** It doesn't have to do with the RFP process; it has to do with the availability of services.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Human resources.

**Mrs Pupatello:** You're not spending the money that you currently have, and there are organizations out there—the CCACs are an example—that are spending in excess of 100% of the contracts they've signed. So that's being spent. Aside from the issue of nurses not available to meet the increased demand, they are still spending 110% of the contracts they've signed, and organizations are still saying no to a patient who is being offered to them because they can't meet additional demand. So it's not the same.

Just explain to me how, in that context, we are not spending the money when the contracts are being met in excess of 100%, which doesn't even speak to how much more isn't being met because they are just not meeting their obligation to accept every patient being sent their way.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute.

**Mr McKinley:** I think you're talking about two different years, to begin with, because the situation you're talking about did not occur in 1999-2000. The situation in 1999-2000 was that the CCACs spent the entire allocation that we gave them.

**Mrs Pupatello:** And then some, didn't they?

**Mr McKinley:** No, not really.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Well, they were in deficit and you did pay out deficits in the past year.

**Mr McKinley:** There were individual CCACs that had deficits, but there were others with surpluses. So there was an interim reallocation throughout the province on CCACs, but generally speaking the CCACs spent their allocation last year.

**Ms Lankin:** I actually will return to those issues at another time. I wonder, before I begin with questions, if there is an answer to the drug benefit program numbers.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Yes, there is.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Lankin:** It's being typed up, so it will be brought over today? OK, great.

Minister, I had a couple of other short questions on cancer care, and then I want to go on to another area.

I was perplexed when you said that you hadn't asked for Cancer Care Ontario to prepare a proposal with respect to expansion of the re-referral program. You know that I've asked you on several occasions over the last year to consider the addition of uterine and rectal cancers to the classification of cancers that are eligible for the re-referral program. I did that because Cancer Care Ontario and Princess Margaret Hospital were saying to me that in the immediate short term—we all agree we don't want to be re-referring people; we want to treat them here at home—it would help ease the situation. This was over the months when we continued to see the waiting times, while they improved, not improve at the rate you had expected.

I have been informed by Cancer Care Ontario and Princess Margaret that the ministry recently asked them



for a proposal on the addition of these two cancers and what the cost would be for the re-referral program, so when you said that didn't happen, I was confused with the information I had received.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask the deputy to specifically respond to that request for a formal proposal.

**Mr Daniel Burns:** I think the question is how the discussion arose.

**Ms Lankin:** It's kind of simple. Do you want that proposal? Did you ask them for it or not?

**Mr Burns:** The immediate present discussion began with those organizations raising with me, in a conversation, the question of whether or not we ought to re-configure the re-referral program. We've had an exchange of letters since. In those letters, I did say to them, "If you wish us to consider the reconfiguration of those programs, please put it together in documentary form." I think the minister, in her earlier remarks, was referring to that.

**Ms Lankin:** Having this issue raised in the House and having it attributed to Cancer Care Ontario and Princess Margaret, perhaps because it came from an opposition critic, heaven forbid that the minister would have asked if there was any merit to the question and/or pursued it. I find it objectionable, quite frankly, but I certainly accept what you have said, Mr Burns.

Minister, these are, I think, quite brief. You said at one point that hindsight is 20-20, and I sure feel that. There are things, I would readily admit, having an opportunity with eight years' hindsight, that I might have wanted to review and then take different decisions when I was honoured to occupy the post that you currently occupy.

I wonder if you could tell me what your government's rationale was—and I recognize you weren't the minister at the time—for cancelling the two new cancer centres in Durham region and Mississauga that had been announced in 1994 and that were scheduled to open in 1998.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask Dr Levin to respond to that particular question.

**Dr Levin:** I'm not sure, to be quite honest, of the exact process that took place at the time. I do know that the Ministry of Health was exploring with Cancer Care Ontario various options in terms of increasing capacity for radiation treatment at that time. Some of the options that were being entertained, for example, were whether it would be possible to increase and expand capacity in the existing cancer centres to accommodate the needs of cancer patients in the future. My understanding is that when that happened, the building of the new cancer centres was temporarily put on hold while those decisions were being analyzed.

**Ms Lankin:** I guess with hindsight being 20-20, it's too bad they were temporarily put on hold, because we would have had two centres operating from 1998.

**Dr Levin:** If I could respond to that, the problem we have in the province with radiation treatment is not related to the number of machines we have.

**Ms Lankin:** No, it's therapists. I realize that.

**Dr Levin:** Having those new cancer centres on stream now would not have made any difference to our ability to—

**Ms Lankin:** Surely it would have made a difference to patients who could have got treatment closer to home. The minister has told us over and over again that the announcement of the new centres that are coming—which are wonderful and I appreciate that—including the two that the government cancelled, will allow people to get those services closer to home. That would have been a good thing, wouldn't it?

**Dr Levin:** Obviously treatment closer to home is most desirable.

**Ms Lankin:** I think I shouldn't be asking you these questions, Dr Levin.

The one other decision that was taken that I found perplexing, given that there were indications around the problem of the shortage of radiation therapists not just in Ontario but, as the minister has said, worldwide, was the decision around the 1997 program and not providing the funding for that year. I could never make sense of that. As a result, we have a year now where we could have had 50 to 70 radiation therapists graduating and coming into practice, and we don't have them. Was that just a bad decision, an oversight at the time, or was there a real rationale not to provide that funding?

**Dr Levin:** We have actually gone over that in some detail. On June 26, 1996, there was a meeting held between the heads of the radiation therapy training programs in the province and other senior cancer officials and the Ministry of Health. At that point in time, there was an excess—difficult to believe, I know—of radiation therapists.

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**Ms Lankin:** I believe it. You're talking to the minister who was involved in the decision to take 10% of medical students out. I just want this answer on the record, because the next time the minister accuses me of causing the shortage, I will throw this answer back at her.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I didn't know you were the minister.

**Dr Levin:** Actually, I just want to make the point that at the time when that decision was made, there was an excess of radiation therapists in the province, and the decision was made to defer enrolment for a year.

**Ms Lankin:** So, it was actually based on best advice at the time on numbers and projections?

**Dr Levin:** Absolutely.

**Ms Lankin:** I'm glad to hear that, because I could not understand that, given that at least three or four years before that there were projections of shortages. That just shows you the wild variation in human resource planning in this field. It's a pretty tough job.

I have one last question on cancer. You made reference to this, and I actually had wanted to ask it, and I was interested that you are doing some monitoring. Can you tell us currently what the status is of waiting times for oncology surgery?



I understand that there aren't the same kinds of standards that there are and that have been developed for radiation treatment. I understand that people are looking and working at that. But what do we know about what's happening in the province with respect to oncology surgery? Is there any concern that you have or that Cancer Care Ontario has that people are waiting any longer now than they might have before, even though we haven't had good tracking mechanisms? Anecdotally, do we know anything?

**Dr Levin:** No, the short answer to your question. Access to cancer surgery and provision for cancer surgery are addressed within the context of surgical programs within the hospitals and are not tracked discreetly as cancer surgery by Cancer Care Ontario or anyone else in the province to our knowledge.

**Ms Lankin:** There is certainly work going on in Cancer Care Ontario looking at that. There have been some reports that have been written.

**Dr Levin:** We haven't seen that yet.

**Ms Lankin:** You haven't seen any of the articles that have been written or anything?

**Dr Levin:** No, I haven't seen any detailed analysis of wait times for cancer surgery from Cancer Care Ontario yet.

**Ms Lankin:** There is some stuff available, but I think it's more in article form as opposed to the final report. Actually, I believe I've got a copy of one of them.

**Dr Levin:** Perhaps John King would like to—

**Ms Lankin:** OK.

**Mr John King:** John King. I'm the assistant deputy minister.

We have been discussing with hospitals some of their surgical workload. Cancer has come up as one of the areas where they're seeing an increase in the workload. The hospitals right now always work through their operating room committees to balance whether they do more surgical cases for oncology as opposed to other cases. That is really being handled within the hospital. We have talked with them about the management of their workload depending on the increase in oncology, but at this time it is an individual hospital choice for their decision on the waiting times for surgery. But for cancer cases, there usually are minimal waits for that.

**Ms Lankin:** Anecdotally, what I have heard is that there is at least the beginning of concern—it may be in only some hospitals; I may not have a good picture of that—that there is a growing period. There are no standards to say that that's a problem, I understand that. What I'm wondering is, would it not make sense for some more explicit discussion between you and Dr Levin, Cancer Care Ontario, to ensure that if there's an emerging problem—the last thing we want is someone who has waited seven months for radiation therapy, etc, before that, has had to wait an unhealthy period of time for the surgery.

**Mr King:** We actually agree with you, and this is something we are discussing. It's not only in, say, Prin-

cess Margaret that surgery occurs. Almost every hospital does the surgery.

**Ms Lankin:** I know that. I'm saying that coordination needs—

**Mr King:** So it's a matter of coordination, so we'll certainly take that. I did want you to know that those concerns are being reviewed right now as far as surgical workloads in the province.

**Ms Lankin:** What I'm asking for is that the oncology information from those surgical workload reviews get centralized and perhaps provided to members of the committee at a later date. It's not information that's needed this week or next week, but that would be helpful as we start to set targets for the future.

**Dr Levin:** Perhaps I could just—

**Ms Lankin:** Could you do it quickly, because I'm actually going to move on to another area.

**Dr Levin:** Earlier on I spoke about the electronic tracking system we're working on for access to cancer treatments. Cancer surgery is one of those, and obviously the best way of dealing with this is to try to be proactive and to identify when the pressures are emerging.

**Ms Lankin:** I agree. I was glad to hear that. I also wanted to say that I think Cancer Care Ontario's proposal for the full radiation machine, the satellite, in Sault Ste Marie—and that is a model, if it works—is tremendous. It's a really important step. I think no one has before looked at doing something like that without all of the infrastructure around it. These comments actually go to Cancer Care Ontario, but I think it's a very welcome development and will be very helpful. Thank you both.

Minister, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions on nursing. The vast majority of questions I had were placed yesterday on the record by Mrs McLeod. A couple that I just want to return to—I don't know if the chief nursing officer is—yes, she's here. A lot of the questions that have been asked around the numbers—the number of full-timers, part-timers, temporary, all of that, and that's information that's being reviewed. My understanding is that there was a report that the joint task force on nursing retention and recruitment did that was completed in June of this year, if not before that, and that report is with the ministry. I'm wondering if you could tell us what the findings were in that report, or, if it's lengthy, would you make that report available? In fact, let me ask that, would you make that report, Minister, available to committee members?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll have Kathleen MacMillan, the chief nursing officer, speak to that report since she has been actively involved in that work.

**Ms Kathleen MacMillan:** Kathleen MacMillan, chief nursing officer. I believe the report that you're referring to—

**The Vice-Chair:** Could you speak up?

**Ms MacMillan:** I believe the report you're referring to is Ensuring the Care will be There: Report on Nursing Recruitment and Retention in Ontario from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. My under-

standing is that this report is public, that you can obtain a copy of that report very easily.

**Ms Lankin:** Was there not a report that was actually either commissioned by—or maybe this is the same one—or prepared by the joint task force on nursing retention and recruitment? I believe there is a report in the hands of that joint task force that has, to date, not been made public. I would like a copy of that.

**Ms MacMillan:** I think the one you're talking about may be the one that the joint provincial nursing subcommittee did on community nursing recruitment and retention, which we are actively using within the ministry right now and analyzing issues around community nursing.

**Ms Lankin:** In fact, that is the report. Could you make a copy of that report available to committee members, please? I would be able to return it next week with specific questions relating to that.

**Ms MacMillan:** We can share that. My understanding is that we can make that available to you.

**Ms Lankin:** I would appreciate that, and if we could have that before Friday that would be useful. I'd like to go over it over the weekend.

The other nursing question that I don't think we touched on completely yesterday was the use of agency nurses. I believe there are numbers available—now I'm talking hospital-based nursing—that indicate what's happening in the hospital sector with the use of agency nurses. Could you tell us what you know about that?

**Ms MacMillan:** We wouldn't have final statistics on that until we actually have gone through all of the audited financial statements from the hospitals. They do report, as part of their reporting to the ministry on the management information systems, the proportion of dollars that go to purchased nursing services.

**Ms Lankin:** They've done that for a while, haven't they?

**Ms MacMillan:** They've done that for a while. We can look at trends on that. We're reviewing the operating plans and the audited financial statements now. We wouldn't expect to have that information until November.

**Ms Lankin:** For which year?

**Ms MacMillan:** For last year.

**Ms Lankin:** For 1999?

**Ms MacMillan:** It would be for 1999-2000.

**Ms Lankin:** Would you provide us with the numbers from 1995 to 1998-99, then?

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**Ms MacMillan:** I think we could probably do that. We'd have to run those specifically, the purchased services for nursing. We'd have to run those statistics, but we can probably get those.

**Ms Lankin:** I think one of the things we would all acknowledge, and I think the minister has spoken to it in her comments, is that with the problem we're having recruiting nurses, in fact, hospitals have been more and more reliant on bringing in agency nurses. I'd like to see

if that trend is on the upswing, because it speaks to the bigger problem we're going to have down the road.

**Ms MacMillan:** That would vary considerably from one hospital to another, based on my knowledge of different hospitals. There are some, as I believe I mentioned yesterday in response to Mrs McLeod's question, that would use no agencies at all, and there would be others that would use agency for just specific areas such as critical care, for example, and would not be using them in other areas. So it would be very much a different picture from hospital to hospital.

**Ms Lankin:** If you can provide those numbers, the overall trends, if it is easy in the way in which it's kept to run a breakdown by institution, that would be very helpful. I'd appreciate that.

One other question on that general topic. Do you have numbers of nursing vacancies in hospitals? Do they report that to you in any way?

**Ms MacMillan:** We might get that from the nursing data that they would submit, but we wouldn't have that available right now because we're still looking at nursing plans, so in the nursing plan data that I mentioned I will have in November, I will get some picture—

**Ms Lankin:** I just might suggest that it's something you contemplate putting into the mix of what you gather from hospitals while you're studying this, because again there appears, from what people are saying, to be a growing number of vacancies that are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. It would be interesting to see what those numbers are. I'm sure it would correlate in the end to the use of agency nurses as well—in certain hospitals, not in all.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute.

**Ms Lankin:** Wow. I wanted to get into my next big area, but I guess I will have to wait on that. So on nurses, the last question perhaps—I think I'll leave it at that. I'm going to wait to get into the next section, when I have a bit more time. Perhaps you could add my minute on next time.

**The Vice-Chair:** OK. Mr Stewart.

**Mr Stewart:** I'm not going to ramble this time, Madam Minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got 20 minutes to do that.

**Mr Stewart:** —because it appeared that possibly due to my rambling you didn't have the opportunity to maybe complete the question that I'd asked you regarding the doctor shortage in some of the rural areas and certainly the way they are trying to recruit them. As has been mentioned, certainly the way of the past for doctors in every small town and small community in Ontario is not going to be the thing of the future due to the change, as well as the nurse practitioners that could be used in some of the rural areas and certainly in some of northern areas. Maybe you would like to finish or make additional comments on that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It certainly is our objective to take every step possible in order to ensure that within the province of Ontario we not only have an adequate supply of physicians but that there be appropriate distribution



and also an appropriate mix. I guess that's why we originally asked Dr McKendry to do a thorough evaluation of the situation as it exists. He did come forward with some recommendations, and the information that he has provided has now gone to the expert panel under Dr Peter George.

In the short-term, based on the information and the recommendations that were made by Dr McKendry regarding the issue of physician supply, our government did move forward to provide \$810,000 to fund 15 additional post-graduate training positions in Ontario to recruit Canadian medical school graduates who receive post-graduate training in the US. We also set aside \$1.3 million to increase the international medical graduate program by 50%. That, of course, is our foreign-trained doctors.

Thirdly, we're expanding the re-entry training program and providing funding of \$4.5 million for advanced skills training for family doctors to provide specialties such as obstetrics, anaesthesia and emergency medicine. We have also doubled the number of community development officers to help underserved areas recruit doctors, and have provided \$1.2 million to expand by 25% the northern family medicine residency program in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. These were the immediate recommendations we were able to accept from Dr McKendry to begin to address the issue.

Of course at the present time we have Dr Peter George chairing the expert panel. He's looking at providing medium- and long-term recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The mandate of that panel—and I think this is very important—is to develop a framework where we can better assess physician human resource needs including a model for measuring and monitoring the supply of physician services and the appropriate mix of specialties.

He and his panel are also examining changes in what's needed as far as enrolment at the medical schools. We're also taking a look at the issue of recruiting additional international medical graduates, and the panel is also advising on changes to the post-graduate medical education system so that the most appropriate mix of physicians is achieved. As well, they are recommending how best to attract physicians to remote communities.

However, we are looking forward; we have not received the recommendations. I might ask Colin Andersen, from the Ministry of Health, to speak further to what we are doing. I think the primary care pilot initiative certainly speaks to increasing accessibility to physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and social workers. Certainly we have made significant inroads in providing nurse practitioners to improve access in Ontario. I would ask Colin to continue.

**Mr Colin Andersen:** I'm Colin Andersen, the ADM of policy for the ministry. As the minister mentioned, in response to Dr McKendry's report, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced on December 22 that it would immediately implement a number of Dr McKendry's short-term recommendations and in fact

committed to providing \$11 million for a number of initiatives.

We are funding additional post-graduate training in Ontario to recruit back Canadian medical school graduates who have taken their post-graduate training in the US and require further training to meet Canadian standards and requirements. These positions are specifically targeted to underserved areas and specialties.

We're also increasing undergraduate medical school enrolment by 40 positions or about 7.5%, from 532 to 572 first-year undergraduate positions in the 2000 academic year. We're expanding the international medical graduate program by 50%, from 24 to 36 positions, and targeting all new entry positions to underserved areas and specialties.

We're doubling the number of community development officers from three to six, to help underserved areas recruit doctors in their communities, and we're expanding the two northern family medicine residency training programs by increasing the number of entry training positions by 25%, from 24 to 30, and by more than doubling the number of third-year advanced training family medicine positions in areas such as anaesthesia, obstetrics and emergency medicine. We're also expanding the ministry's re-entry training return and service program by 15, from 25 to 40 positions.

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As I said, those were an immediate response to Dr McKendry's short-term recommendations. The ministry has also announced the formation of an Expert Panel on Health Professional Human Resources, chaired by Dr Peter George. As the minister mentioned, it's looking at a number of things. It delivered an interim recommendation to the minister over the summer which resulted in the ministry working with the faculties of medicine across the province to immediately increase enrolment by 40 positions. So there are a number of things that are specifically related to the fact-finders' findings and the expert panel, as well as a number of initiatives that exist already to help improve the distribution of physicians across Ontario, a number of those programs that have been underway for a while.

There are a number of initiatives, such as a 70-hour sessional fee for physicians working nights, weekends and holidays in eligible hospital ERs in selected northern and rural southern communities. We have a community-sponsored contracts program that was announced back in June 1996 to address recruitment and retention issues. We have globally funded group practice agreements that were announced in the spring of 1997 and are offered to 29 underserved communities. We have community development officers, which is a support program provided by the ministry to help rural and northern communities recruit and retain health care professionals. We have a discounted payment policy as part of an agreement that was negotiated between the OMA and the ministry, in addition to a re-entry training program we also have that was part of an earlier agreement with the OMA to offer retraining for return of service in underserved areas of Ontario.



We announced a free tuition program on July 24, offering \$4 million for free tuition and location incentives to new doctors willing to practise in underserved areas. We have a physician job registry which helps communities to recruit physicians, and a locum program to help those communities that are experiencing shortages of physician services by providing temporary medical services and reimbursement of physicians' travel and accommodation within Ontario.

All of these are in addition to our underserved area designation program, which identifies those communities that are experiencing shortages of physicians in particular areas. So as you can see, there is a wide variety of programs in existence.

I haven't touched on the specialist retention initiative, which is also available, and the rural and northern medical training programs as well, which help fund medical schools to offer medical students and residents training outside of the teaching hospitals, which are generally in the urban communities, allowing them to get some experience and skills that they need to practise effectively in the work environment after graduation.

There are programs based out of Sudbury and Thunder Bay, the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network. There's the family medicine north residency program based out of Thunder Bay; the northeastern Ontario family medicine residency program based out of Sudbury; the northeastern Ontario elective program, also out of Sudbury; the northwestern Ontario elective medical program in Thunder Bay; the rural Ontario medical program based out of Collingwood; and finally, the southwestern Ontario rural medicine program based out of Goderich. So quite a wide variety of programs are available to address what we certainly consider to be a very important issue with regard to addressing the supply and distribution of physicians throughout the province.

**Mr Stewart:** Just one more question. Would you care to make any comments about the nurse practitioner experience? Certainly it has been expanded and developed. We happen to have one in my particular riding and I understand it's working well, but I've not heard a great deal about the nurse practitioner experience and how it is developing.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just briefly, Mr Stewart—and certainly Mr Andersen may have more information to contribute to the discussion—as you know, it was our government that recognized and made it possible for nurse practitioners to practise in the province. I'm very pleased to say that we presently have about 226 nurse practitioners providing health services in Ontario.

In February 2000 we announced the addition of 106 new nurse practitioners. Seventy-six of them are in the underserved communities. Twenty of these new nurse practitioners are in the long-term-care facilities, participating in a pilot project, because we do anticipate there is a significant role for them to play there. We have five of these new nurse practitioners working in the aboriginal medical centres, and we have five new nurse practitioners in our primary care network.

We believe the addition of all of these nurse practitioners is making a tremendous impact on increasing access to services for people in the province, particularly in the underserved areas. Certainly we look forward in the months and years ahead to expanding the complement of nurse practitioners in the province. They have been very well received. As you know, they are able to perform many of the same functions as doctors, and in that way they are serving us in areas where people don't have access to a physician.

So I think you can stay tuned. As we expand the primary care networks throughout the province over the next four years, we believe some of the key members of the health professional team will be the nurse practitioners, who will be working hand in hand with the physicians, the nurses, the social workers and other members of the primary health care team.

We've been quite pleased with the public response, and certainly they are giving our health system more flexibility and are allowing for greater access to primary care services.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Last spring there was some controversy around the amount of money that our government was spending on pressuring the federal government to reinvest in health care systems throughout Canada. I think we asked the feds to reinvest at 1994 levels. I wonder if you could comment on the amount of money we spent, how much money we received from the feds, and what effect that money has had on Ontario's health care system.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** First of all, we did receive a reduction in transfer payments in 1994-95 and in each subsequent year. Despite the fact that there was an agreement reached in September of this year where the federal government did commit to the provinces and territories that they would give us back the money they've taken away, it was not a complete restoration to the 1994-95 levels, nor does it take into consideration the tremendous pressures that our health system is experiencing. In fact, we hear in the estimates here about the tremendous growth and the need for additional health services based on a growing and aging population.

As you know, our government did undertake a campaign to pressure and encourage the federal government to restore the money they had cut from health care. I can tell you that all of my colleagues across Canada unanimously agreed that there needed to be total restoration, and as a result of the pressure that was exerted, as I say, we're getting some of our money back. However, we will not see the restoration of those transfer payments until at least April 1, 2001, because the agreement did not contain a clause that would flow the money immediately. The only money that we are going to be seeing in the short term is money for equipment, and I'm going to ask Colin Andersen, the ADM, to share with you the breakdown of the financial resources that will be coming our way, and also when that money's going to be available and how it's going to flow. In some instances, such as the technology money, it's actually going into a corporation.

We're not actually going to have the flexibility to make that money available to people in this province in a way that we might deem to be the most appropriate. So, Mr Andersen.

1720

**Mr Andersen:** As the minister indicated, there was an agreement that was reached among the Premiers across the country and the Prime Minister in September of this year which breaks down into a number of parts. There was a basic restoration of some of the CHST money back to 1994-95 dollar value levels, and I would want to note here that the restoration of that money does not start until next fiscal year, April 1, 2001. It's not a full restoration at that point in time, and even when the federal government has completed putting the CHST money back into the system that it intends to do so, at the end of this arrangement its funding will only be 13 cents on the dollar for Ontario health care costs, which is—

**The Chair:** There's about two minutes left on the government's time.

**Mr Andersen:** —which is still less than the 18 cents on the dollar that it was paying back in the 1994-95 period. There were a few other components to the funding agreement that was reached. As the minister mentioned, there was a component for medical equipment money for across the country which will be allocated on a per capita basis. Ontario will be entitled to about \$190 million of that amount this year, and \$190 million in respect of the next fiscal year, which we will be able to draw down at some point in the near future.

There's an amount for IT. The federal government is putting \$500 million into essentially a corporation which—indications are that we will not actually get a per-province share of that amount of money.

The final component was money, again on a one-time basis, for primary care reform, which will start next year and last for four years. As you are aware, Ontario is, I would say, leading the charge in implementing primary care reform across the country, and we have a number of ongoing needs. We will gladly take whatever money the federal government has to offer. We certainly would wish that it would be on an ongoing basis. We still need to work out with the federal government the exact details of how that money will be allocated among provinces. Deputies from across the country will be working with the federal government over the next number of months to look at those various initiatives.

Likewise, here in Ontario we will be looking at the amount of medical equipment funding that has been allocated to us, comparing that to the needs that we have in this province to provide funding for medical equipment to various institutions, not just hospitals but various others. In the very near future we will be looking at how to allocate that amount of money. It will be up to Ontario to decide how to divvy that up, because it is provided to us on a per capita basis.

**The Chair:** Thank you. We now turn to the official opposition. You have 20 minutes, Ms McLeod.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I want to turn now to

ambulances, which is 1405-4 on page 108 and 109. The first question I want to ask is, I'm looking at a cost of \$30.8 million for exit and transition costs and I'd like to know whether or not that is primarily or exclusively for severance costs, as land ambulance contracts have been turned over to municipalities. There was a requirement, I understand, that the municipalities sever all of their existing contracts that they were inheriting by a given date and that there are significant severance costs that have been experienced as a result of that. I would like to know what was the date that municipalities had to end the contracts by, why was that date chosen and are these the severance costs we're looking at?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask Mary Kardos Burton to respond to the questions that you have asked.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** You asked about the costs on page 108 related to exit and transition costs. Actually, those costs are for more than severance. They are also for close-out audits. They are also for leave-termination. The exit and transition costs, out of the \$30 million, total approximately \$20 million to \$25 million. Those have not all been paid out, but they were up to December 31, 1999. So those were the costs that the government has agreed to in terms of costs for operators.

**Mrs McLeod:** So is it the \$25 million you mentioned or the \$30.8 million?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Approximately \$20 million to \$25 million. It has not all been paid out yet.

**Mrs McLeod:** The balance then is, as you said, rental costs—

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The balance is the close-out audits, the leasing etc.

**Mrs McLeod:** So it's fair to say that that entire \$30.8 million was in direction relationship to the decision of the government to download the administration of the ambulance service and, further, to require that the existing contracts be terminated so that any requests for proposals could go out. Fair comment?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** What the government did was offer the municipalities three choices in terms of how they continued the ambulance services. When they took on the ambulance services, municipalities had a choice of either taking it on their own or continuing with existing operators or, in fact, doing an RFP process. They were required by the September 3, 1999, since 1999 was the transition year, to decide on those choices. Those were requirements that were laid out in legislation, and actually those choices have now been made by municipalities.

As you know, January 1, 2001 is the date on which it will be complete municipal delivery. What we've done this year, I am happy to say, is that 11 municipalities have actually taken on ambulance services this year and there will be five more by the end of December.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate knowing that. I will have some other questions, but just so I'm absolutely clear, regardless of which choice was made, was there an incurring of severance costs, wind-up costs?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** For the operators that were there.



**Mrs McLeod:** Yes. Was there a reason why existing contracts could not have been fulfilled before the transition, either to the municipality or to a new operator or to an RFP process took place? Why was there a requirement that those contracts had to be severed before they had expired? Why was it necessary to spend \$30 million on it?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Because the choice was for municipalities in terms of deciding when they could take on the services.

**Mrs McLeod:** But they had to make a decision by December 3, 1999, and, whichever choice, they were going to incur severance costs. So they weren't given the choice of being able to continue to run existing contracts so they could avoid the actual payment of severance.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** When the government extended the year in terms of ambulance services, it changed from January 1, 2000, to 2001; it was a transition year. What we decided in the legislation was that—because it could have been that municipalities could have just taken over January 1, 2001. What was put in the legislation was that there was an option and those who had the capacity and the interest to resume earlier could do so. As I said, there were 11 who took it on in January 2000. But we would never have known that and we had no way of knowing who would take it on in the year 2000.

**Mrs McLeod:** But my point is they didn't have the option of going later, of having the transition later, so there was a \$30.8-million cost incurred for the government in the course of setting that transitional timeline. In terms of air ambulance, which is going through the same thing, I understand that severance cost is \$1.6 million. Would that be an accurate figure?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** In terms of the air ambulance, what's happening now is that the government is going out on RFPs for the critical—

**Mrs McLeod:** I know what's happening. I'm just asking if you have a handle on the severance costs at this point.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** I'll verify the severance costs for you.

1730

**Mrs McLeod:** So now we have new services in place. The government has decided that it is going to continue to fund 50% of the cost, even as the administrative responsibility is downloaded. There was one news report that said—obviously I would have, if I had time, a whole lot of questions about response times, costs, equipment etc, but I want to boil it down as much as I can. There was a story that said there had been an agreement reached between the municipalities and the ministry that would pay 50% of the costs up to \$30 million. Is that \$30 million a fact?

**Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek):** If I may, the agreement is actually on the funding template. The funding template was an agreement that was reached between the municipalities and the province. We looked at costs for services pre-transfer, in terms of 1999, to the municipalities, and then the municipalities came back and said, "As

a result of the transfer, there are a number of costs that we are now incurring that you, as the province, did not incur," for example, leases and different taxes that were being paid. So we asked them to identify all of the costs that they now had to incur that we as the province did not have to incur. They came back with those. We came to an agreement on the funding template and it's our best estimate right now that it'll be between \$25 million and \$30 million additional cost to the province.

**Mrs McLeod:** Is that agreement in the template something that could be made available?

**Mr Clark:** Absolutely.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that.

There is a figure here in the estimates book that shows \$20 million for response time commitment. Can I ask, first of all, whether or not those dollars are flowing to the municipalities now or is that part of the new agreement? Secondly, what response times does that fund?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The \$20-million figure has not been flowed to the municipalities. In terms of response time, what we are doing is a consultation process with municipalities on all standards. The first part of the funding arrangement was the funding template that Mr Clark talked about. There will be a consultation with municipalities on all standards, including response times.

**Mrs McLeod:** Let me just understand that. The \$20 million was a change in the estimates for last year. Am I misreading that? Does that not mean that would have been expected to flow in the 1999-2000 year, if it was a change? I'm looking at page 109, response time commitment funding increase, explanations for expenditure change from the 1999-2000 estimates. So I'm not even looking at the 2000-01 estimates.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** You do see the \$20 million for response time and that wasn't what it was intended for, but it has not been paid out to municipalities.

**Mrs McLeod:** Even though it was a year old?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** That's correct.

**Mrs McLeod:** Can you tell me then, at that point in time, what response time was that intended to support, in terms of minutes, and what is now the commitment in terms of response time?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The response time that exists currently is what's in the legislation, which is 90% of what it was in 1996. In terms of the number of minutes, it varies by community. Every community has different—what Toronto might—

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm not sure that there is a minute time in the legislation, in the Ambulance Act.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** I'm sorry. The minute time is not in the legislation. What's in the legislation is 90% of what it was in 1996.

**Mrs McLeod:** So that would be in terms of minutes?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** My meaning is that Toronto's response time may be eight minutes, Thunder Bay might be 10, Ottawa might be 14. That's what I mean by the minutes in terms of response time. In fact, that's exactly what it is. All of the communities are different.



**Mrs McLeod:** Is it possible, again, for that to be tabled for us, so we know what it is by community?

**Mr Clark:** I don't see why not. I think it's important to note that when we're now proceeding on looking at standards with the municipalities, that is the issue that actually came up in the discussions. The standard that we had for 1996 was basically an arbitrary figure saying 90% of the response times in that community will be the standard.

**Mrs McLeod:** I realize that and that's exactly why I'm asking the questions, because there are some recognized, accepted standards. We haven't been meeting them; the 1996 figures will not show that we're meeting them. I would be interested in any figures you have about what actual response times are, as opposed to what's in the legislation, if you have those figures.

Then what I was wanting to get was, as you work toward an agreement to pay 50% of the costs, it has to be 50% of something and it has to be 50% of an agreed-upon standard. What I need to find out is, in this estimate, when I look at it—not that I can figure out what the shares are because of all the municipal realignment issues. I'm not going to get you into that. I just really wanted to get at the crux of, 50% of what standard?

**Mr Clark:** Yes. The issue that came up as we were doing the consultations, to be quite frank, was that a number of the municipalities had concerns not simply about response times. As we started to deal with it, it became very confusing. We developed the funding template so we knew exactly where we were and what things were covered currently. Then we decided we would move the standards and response times to a separate consultation so that we could look at a number of standards we think we should be talking about as partners; for example, what type of equipment is needed by the paramedics? What is the minimum standard? You're getting some municipalities that clearly have a significant tax base that are going for the Cadillac, if you will, of defibrillators, whereas other municipalities are saying, "We can't afford that and we're being told this will do." So what is the minimum standard? We're listing those items that need to have standards and we're doing that consultation now, including response times.

**Mrs McLeod:** I assume that's not available yet, but when it is, you'll make that available?

**Mr Clark:** It's a work in progress.

**Mrs McLeod:** Are you also looking at the request of many of the municipalities, or at least some of the municipalities, to have a standard that includes at least one advanced life support paramedic on each team?

**Mr Clark:** That's under discussion also.

**Mrs McLeod:** With differences from area to area, I would assume.

**Mr Clark:** Yes. One of the concerns that have come up, and I should mention it now, is that a number of rural municipalities have concerns because of the tax base they have. They have a lower tax base. They don't have the same population. They don't have the same commercial and corporate; they have farms. If we set a standard for

Ottawa, for example—not picking on any municipalities—that says, "This is what we want," then Haldimand-Norfolk says, "That's great. How are we ever going to pay for it?"

**Mrs McLeod:** I don't want to interrupt. I just have so many areas, so what I'm trying to do is make my questions as precise as possible. When there is public information that you can make available, that would be very helpful.

**Mr Clark:** No problem.

**Mrs McLeod:** It will save us asking what might be seen as inaccurate questions in the House in the future. When that agreement is available, I would appreciate seeing it because it's an area of great concern.

I recognize, before I leave ambulances, that of course getting to the scene of the accident is something where you can provide resources but you can't control how long it takes to get back to the emergency department. I'm not going to get us back into redirects or closures of emergency departments, but there's no question that in the increased response time for ambulances that we're seeing, the primary increase is not in the length of time it takes to get to the scene, but to get from the scene to a hospital. That's something we should all be extremely concerned about.

The next area I wanted to ask about—and I'm sorry to be moving so quickly, but we do have an awful lot to cover—is public health unit funding. Dr Murray McQuigge at the Walkerton inquiry indicated there had been a significant cut to public health units. I believe he said there had been a 20% cut. I can give you the vote reference: page 102, 1405-3. I see a cut of \$3 million in something called "services." I see a cut of \$7.6 million in local health agencies. This is another one where I really don't want you to give me a long story about what part's being paid for by the province and what part's being paid for by the municipalities. I just want to know, when Murray McQuigge says there was a significant cut in public health units, where that cut has come from and how big it is.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask Dr D'Cunha to respond to the issue of support for public health.

**Dr Colin D'Cunha:** Dr D'Cunha, chief medical officer of health. Essentially, the 1999-2000 estimates showed a figure for five quarters worth of funding in light of the government policy announcement in March to fund public health costs 50-50. Linked to that was the fact that funding was going to move to the municipal financial year, which is the calendar year. In effect, what you saw was five quarters worth of funding in last year's estimates to cover off that one quarter that was not part of our financial year.

**Mrs McLeod:** Has there been a cut?

**Dr D'Cunha:** No.

**Mrs McLeod:** Then why would Dr McQuigge say there's been a significant cut?

**Dr D'Cunha:** I would ask you to ask him that question. What I have is that public health funding has gone up. What we noticed in surveys was that public health

funding continues to go up. In fact, this year public health funding continues to rise further.

**Mrs McLeod:** Is it possible, then, that the cut that was being referred to was a cut that was made at the municipal level?

**Dr D'Cunha:** Dr McQuigge's budget has actually gone up over the three-year period, based on something I looked at in May.

**Mrs McLeod:** Is that evidence going to be provided at the inquiries now?

**Dr D'Cunha:** I'll be delighted to present it to committee at the end of the day today or in time for next week's hearings.

**Mrs McLeod:** I would appreciate that. Thank you.

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I have five minutes left and I have a whole lot of questions on related facilities, which I think includes Cancer Care Ontario, which probably takes me back to cancer care. I'm not going to get to rehabilitation today, but I think rehabilitation is here.

There's \$137 million underspent in this whole area of related facilities. Is it possible to pinpoint in one minute or less where that underspending is so I can ask a couple of cancer questions?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What page are you on?

**Mrs McLeod:** On page 56, vote 1402-1. It's the \$137 million underspending. I recognize that we've had a correction on the CCO budget so we're seeing a \$29-million increase in CCO's budget.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Mrs McLeod, that relates to the funding for hepatitis C. Under related facilities, it relates to the specific funding associated with our commitments around hepatitis C. That \$137 million is solely related to that particular figure. I don't know if John wants to speak to it any further.

**Mrs McLeod:** I know there's been a change in the estimates in that regard.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** It relates to the payouts associated with that commitment.

**Mr King:** Compensation for the hepatitis C victims was the major underspending in that area. Then under the related facilities there are a number of program areas in that line including the Canadian Blood Services and Cancer Care Ontario. The major portion that I think you're referring to was the compensation program for the hepatitis C victims. They did not have the uptake that was projected for that program.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'll give some thought to that and come back to it later.

Could I ask specifically on Cancer Care Ontario, which is funded under this budget line—and it will be quick. The budget shows an increase in the revised figures that you tabled with us yesterday. It shows an increase in the cancer care budget of \$29 million. Is that it for 2000-01?

**Mr King:** That is it for the estimates for that period of time, and that included the increases in the program that was providing for radiation and also for chemotherapy. There would be included in there some out of country.

The total spending for this budget—not all of the dollars have been allocated at this point.

**Mrs McLeod:** As I recall from public accounts, and I think it was for last year's budget, Cancer Care Ontario had requested \$50 million in increase and \$40 million had been approved. Could you relate this \$29 million either to that figure or to this year's request?

**Mr King:** When we're referring to several numbers, I'd rather specifically get back to you on that because we're dealing with different periods of time. All of the funding that has been requested by Cancer Care Ontario has been approved. It's just the period of timing of the flow of the dollars.

**Mrs McLeod:** So the prevention budget from last year has now been approved, because it had not been approved last year.

**Mr King:** I'm sorry. On the dollars you were referring to on the re-referral program, the increase in the radiation costs that were provided by the minister and also the increase in chemotherapy for that period, we did flow. I'm nervous about referring to numbers that you are throwing out without coming back—

**Mrs McLeod:** Fair enough. I'm going to run out of my time. I was referring specifically to the total request of Cancer Care Ontario and how much of that budget flowed. They didn't get everything they asked for last year. I guess I'm looking to know how \$29 million—but I appreciate the time frame and I'll wait for it.

Two very quick questions, then.

**Mr King:** If I could, I would rather get back on that number, because all of the dollars requested last year did flow to Cancer Care Ontario. I think it's important that we have that for the record.

**Mrs McLeod:** There is another record. We can compare the two in terms of public accounts. We'll see if we're on the same page.

The re-referral program appears to be doubling this year. I'll give you my page reference, page 67. There's an extra \$17.28 million. I just want to confirm that the program is doubling.

**Mr King:** On the re-referral program, actually there was an extra maximum amount and a maximum number of patients in that program. Those dollars are in two divisions. They are in my division and also in the assistant deputy minister for health services division, so there are two numbers in that line. That re-referral program has not doubled. We are still working on the numbers that were previously approved through the minister.

**Mrs McLeod:** There is an increase of \$17.2 million, so perhaps you could give me a comparative so I know to what extent that's doubling or a change. I know there was a public accounts figure of \$23.1 million.

**Mr King:** Just on that, because I think it's important, the total program was \$23 million; \$17 million basically comes from the health services division for the cost of physicians and hospital services, and \$6 million of that program comes from my division. So it is \$23 million for the re-referral program.



**The Chair:** Thank you for your answer. Now to Ms Lankin for the beginning of your 20-minute period. You have 20 minutes. We obviously won't finish today.

**Ms Lankin:** We won't get through it all today, that's right.

Could I ask leg research about the number of things we have asked for the ministry to provide, whether we could get a list of things so we can check off the materials as they—

**Ms Anne Marzalik:** Yes, we have an itemization.

**The Chair:** I'll take the opportunity before you start, Ms Lankin, to acknowledge that a drug breakdown of costs between ODB, Trillium and special drugs was provided by the ministry. Please proceed, Ms Lankin.

**Ms Lankin:** Thank you. I appreciate that information having been provided.

Minister, I would like to ask some questions about community health centres. That vote item is on page 97. The estimates for this year are roughly \$111 million. Let me indicate that I understand the community health centre program very well. I understand the goal of delivery of accessible health services, of population health needs, of base programming, of health promotion. I really do understand the program.

It's nice to see a planned enhancement of their funding of \$4.7 million. Specifically, my first question is, could you tell me what that money is dedicated to?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The enhancements are part of two initiatives, Ms Lankin. There is \$3.1 million for new CHCs and there is \$1.6 million in operating cost increases due to capital projects. The increase of \$3.1 million in 2000-01 provides some base funding for the implementation of programs and services in three communities: (1) the Grand Bend and Area Rural Community Primary Health Care Centre, (2) the Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie in Cornwall for a satellite in the town of Crysler, and (3) for the Kitchener Downtown Intercommunity Health Centre.

The expenditure increase of the \$1.6 million is identified operating cost increases in 2000-01 related to 14 community health centres that have completed capital projects to expand in order to meet the increased volume of service demands.

So those are the projects and new initiatives that have been undertaken with the additional funding.

**Ms Lankin:** In the \$1.6 million, the expansion of operational dollars based on expanded capital needs and program volume, is there any money in that that will allow CHCs to provide for salary enhancements to their employees? Many have said there has been no increase in salaries for eight years now, I think. Does that money address that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask Mary Kardos Burton to specifically speak to the issue of salary enhancements within the \$1.6 million funds.

**Ms Kardos Burton:** In response to your specific question—the response I gave in terms of the CCACs as well—we are looking at community pressures. If there are operational issues that have been raised by CHCs—

**Ms Lankin:** The \$1.6 million, does it have any salary enhancements in it? You may have to meet that in the future, but does that money—

**Ms Kardos Burton:** No. It was the operating for the CHCs.

**Ms Lankin:** For the operating. OK.

1750

**Ms Kardos Burton:** Yes. But in answer to your question, we would look at any pressures that CHCs or community agencies would look for.

**Ms Lankin:** Is it Grand Bend? The Grand Bend and Kitchener ones, are those brand new CHCs?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The Kitchener one is totally new, and Grand Bend.

**Ms Lankin:** That's really terrific. I'm a big fan of moving aggressively on the expansion of CHCs now that there is budget room. There are over 70 communities; I think it's up to 75 now. There are a couple more every week. A lot of them are in underserved communities. Some of them are within the GTA high-needs communities that have expressed an interest in establishing community health centres. The association, as you know, has put together a proposal. It's roughly \$115 million that would double the number of community health centres in the province. That proposal is with the ministry and has been under review for some time.

I know you can't make an announcement today, but \$115 million, given the size of your budget and given the kinds of programs you announced, could have a tremendous impact in those communities in delivering accessible health treatment as well as population-based health needs programs as well as good health promotion programs. I'm wondering, are you favourably disposed to that kind of program, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The fact that we have encouraged, I guess, the establishment of these three new CHCs certainly speaks to the fact that we do support the concept of the CHC, and you're right: it does respond to the needs of people in the underserved areas. It also responds to the needs of people in some of the downtown areas where you have people with some very unique and special needs.

**Ms Lankin:** That's what I refer to as the high-needs areas as opposed to underserved areas.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right, and as we move forward and we take a look at what we now call the primary care network, in many respects the way they would be structured would bear a great resemblance to the community health centres, where you'd have—

**Ms Lankin:** You've come right to my next question.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right, and that's where I do believe we're moving. I personally support the concept of having teams of health professionals working together to identify all the health needs of patients.

**Ms Lankin:** Can you tell me then: with the eight pilot projects that are currently in place for the primary care pilot project, are we looking at ensuring, for example, that there must be multiple health professionals involved in the delivery of that care, not just group physician



practices? Are we looking at ensuring that there must be health promotion programs, not just illness treatment programs? Can you tell me, within those pilot projects, how they're structured, those elements of primary care reform, as opposed to simply paying doctors differently and having the offices open 24-7?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right. Certainly, when we talk about primary care networks, we're talking about teams of health professionals working collaboratively together to address the health needs of people in this province. It includes physicians but it also includes nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers and psychologists. Obviously each community network is going to have an opportunity to identify what is needed in that particular community. As well, we now are in a position where we would flow funding to the primary care networks that would enable the providers to be reimbursed, and have incentives provided to deal with health promotion and illness prevention.

**Ms Lankin:** Can you tell me, in the pilot projects, though, what the structure is? Who's the network versus the providers? I know there are some 120-odd providers who have signed over to the concept, but how's the network constructed?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll call on Mary Catherine Lindberg, who's been involved with the original pilots, but at the same time I should mention to you that we're now working on the implementation of rolling out the primary care networks throughout Ontario. As you know, it would be our hope over the next four years to have 80% of all eligible family physicians practising in these networks.

**Ms Mary Catherine Lindberg:** Mary Catherine Lindberg, Deputy Minister, health services division. We currently have eight primary care networks up and running and we're proposing to go to 11. They're physician-sponsored primary care networks at this point because we're working with the OMA and we developed these over the last three years. They range anywhere from having three physicians to 19 physicians in each one of those networks. On average, there are between eight and 10 physicians in each one.

**Ms Lankin:** Can I just ask you, ADM Lindberg, about the one with three: what other health professionals are practising in that one, for example?

**Ms Lindberg:** Each one of these has a nurse practitioner with them. Each network has the funding for one nurse practitioner, so there is one nurse practitioner. That's in the rural area of Kingston.

**Ms Lankin:** Beyond that, who else?

**Ms Lindberg:** We have not gone beyond that with other providers at this point.

**Ms Lankin:** Here's my concern. As this rolls out, and I come back to community health centres and essentially your vision for the role of community health centres and

primary care reform, what I see happening is, with all due respect to my wonderful friends in the OMA—but you know, there are a few of them who like me. We have a fee-for-service system which was described by many health reformers as problematic because it was a physician gatekeeper. The new primary care networks that are being established, these pilot projects, are physician-led and physician gatekeepers. Having done the negotiations in the context of the OMA and these pilot projects being set up, those of us who want to see community health centre models as primary care networks and a multi-team approach—there are HSOs, there are other models that we've experimented with and we see the strengths and weaknesses. This concerns me, where we're at.

Perhaps it's not fair to ask you; perhaps I have to ask the minister. How are you going to wrest back the vision of primary care reform as opposed to simply alternative payment plans for physicians, which these pilot projects in their early days are beginning to look like?

**Ms Lindberg:** Our model, the Ontario model, as we call it, is built around a multidisciplinary team. It's built around flexibility. It's built around voluntary, which means physicians can voluntarily enter those networks and the patients move voluntarily—

**Ms Lankin:** So is it fair to say that the pilot projects you have don't actually meet the criteria of the Ontario model at this point in time?

**Ms Lindberg:** The model we've put up was established as a joint initiative between the OMA and the ministry, and we are evaluating it.

**Ms Lankin:** What happened to community health centres? What happened to all the other practitioners who should have been at the table?

**Ms Lindberg:** As we move on primary care and the implementation, HSOs, the CHCs, we're looking at those models, which will fit into our flexible model. As I've been telling the CHC association, we're not closing doors; we're opening doors within the flexible model to bring that model within the primary care model.

**Ms Lankin:** I think you should close the door on the group physician without the multiple practitioners model, because that's not primary care reform.

Let me ask you, in terms of CHCs: apparently there are fee-for-service physicians who have expressed an interest in moving over into CHC practices or joining networks with them. Is the agreement with the OMA flexible enough to accommodate that?

**Ms Lindberg:** Yes, it is.

**Ms Lankin:** Mr Chair, I'll resume, since I have some time left, when we come back on Tuesday.

**The Chair:** Yes, we're adjourned for today. About eight minutes left.

**Ms Lankin:** That'll be great. Thank you.

*The committee adjourned at 1759.*



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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 31 October 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 31 octobre 2000

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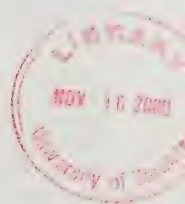
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## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 31 October 2000

Mardi 31 octobre 2000

*The committee met at 1529 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
AND LONG-TERM CARE

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** As the minister is getting to her seat, just a little bit of housekeeping for the members of the committee. You will note from the timetable that should be at your place that there are eight minutes beginning with the third party today. The final round is 35 minutes. We will divide that equally, 11 minutes and 40 seconds. The balance is administrative delay that we have had in the course of these estimates. That will give, as you will see by the table in front of you, each party an equal opportunity in terms of their ability to conduct questions.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** I'm sorry, Mr Chair, could you repeat that?

**The Chair:** We are working on the 20-minute rotations. We finished, on October 25, with 12 minutes of the third party's 20 minutes. We'll resume today with the remaining eight minutes, and then 20 minutes for the government party. There will be time after that for one more 20-minute rotation, after which the final 35 minutes will be divided among the three parties at 11 minutes and 40 seconds each, which will bring each party to an equal amount of time in the estimates. You'll see a chart there demonstrating that.

Without further ado, I'd like to begin. Ms Lankin, you have eight minutes for your questions.

**Ms Lankin:** I'd like to turn very briefly to the vote item for mental health hospital-based services, pages 86 and 87. I have really only one question about this vote item, Minister, and then I'd like to talk to you about—

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm sorry. Which line item was it, Ms Lankin?

**Ms Lankin:** I haven't given you a line item yet, just the vote item on page 86 and the description on page 87. I have one question related to these particular numbers, but then I would like to talk about where the services are going out in terms of the general hospitals.

In terms of increased funding, the provincial psychiatric hospital divestment costs are set out at about \$50 million. I expect that includes severances for employees. I remember an announcement to the effect that the psychiatrists from those hospitals would continue to be paid for

a year or something while they're transferring over to general hospitals. I'm not sure I have the exact detail on that. I wonder if you could just break that number down for me quickly and then I can move on to my more general questions.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Certainly. I would call on Mr King.

**Mr John King:** I'm the assistant deputy minister. Also, Dennis Helm is here. Dennis, the program director for mental health, will answer some of the detailed questions.

These divestment costs you've alluded to are specifically for that. They're severance costs for the employees of the facilities as we divest. There are five hospitals being divested this year, and that was put in the estimates for that group.

They then have an opportunity after that, when they join the public general hospitals—we have a second tier of divestment of those beds again, and there are costs in there for that also. So it's mainly severance costs of divestment.

**Ms Lankin:** What are the specifics of the physicians' payment? I might have got that wrong in my understanding.

**Mr King:** Dennis is going to speak to that.

**Mr Dennis Helm:** I'm Dennis Helm, the director of mental health care programs.

The funding arrangement we have with the physicians and dentists is the following: Most of the physicians in our psychiatric hospitals are in salaried positions, not fee-for-service. Some are on sessions and some are on geographic full-time as well, but they're all salaried positions.

One of our concerns during the transfer process is to ensure that the seriously mentally ill continue to get the kind of service they have been receiving in the psychiatric hospitals. A lot of that lends itself to different levels of interaction with the client and families that's not always a billable service.

So what we have worked out with the receiving hospitals that are receiving the psychiatric services is that, at least to start with, the physicians and psychiatrists will remain on salary with the receiving hospital.

**Ms Lankin:** Is that part of that \$50-million figure in there?

**Mr Helm:** It's part of the operating budget, actually, that we transferred to the receiving hospital over and



above the \$50 million. It's in the base budgets of the hospitals.

**Ms Lankin:** That's where I want to go next: the transfer of the operating budget to the general hospitals and the state of current psychiatric services in general hospitals.

I have spoken with a number of heads of psychiatry in general hospitals, particularly as we were going through Brian's Law, but I've checked back with them since. They are talking about a situation where they are so stretched, particularly some of them in the larger areas, in terms of meeting the demand that is coming in through the emergency rooms, let alone through referrals and other sorts of things. They expect, with effective implementation of Brian's Law, to see a large increased volume arriving in the emergency room, or being hospitalized involuntarily.

I've heard the parliamentary assistant make comments about many announcements to come on the community side, in terms of beefing up investments to give effect to the commitments of the government on that side. But what can we expect on the hospital-based side—because I haven't seen it noted in these estimates—to give real effect to providing high-quality services to this patient clientele when the heads of the psychiatric departments are saying they can't do it now and they don't see a dramatic increase in resources having been allocated to them?

**Mr Helm:** I've been leading an implementation process within the ministry to get things ready for the proclamation date of December 1 for Bill 68. We've set up a structure internally, identifying a number of program areas and issues that we need to address. One is specific to service-related enhancements that we feel have to be considered for the effective implementation of Bill 68.

We're going through a process now of working with our stakeholders, the OMA, the general hospitals with psychiatric services, the psychiatrists, as well as with consumers and families, looking at emergency room pressures that might happen. We're trying to get a grip on that in terms of what we can forecast and make specific recommendations.

It has been a difficult process because we have limited experience, obviously, within Ontario and we're looking at the experience in Saskatchewan and trying to bring that forward to the Ontario setting. But we are looking at emergency room pressures, case-management-related activities for people on community treatment orders, or those that might appear because of the change in the legislation, in the wording. There might be an increased demand for patient assessments, not just community treatment orders. We're also looking at crisis services.

We're looking at that with a view to proposing some action in those areas.

**Ms Lankin:** Right. In fact, when I referred to an increase in involuntary admissions, I meant for the assessments, in addition to the whole process around community treatment orders.

One of the things that I believe is missing, in addition to the resources that are needed in the hospital-based

mental health services, in the mental health system, are performance indicators. What work is being done to look at performance indicators? Shouldn't we, for example, have a policy around suicides? How many are taking place? Are we making any improvements in bringing down the number of suicides? Are there other performance indicators that we should look at?

Three governments ago, there was a committee that looked at health goals with respect to mental health, I believe, but I've not seen performance indicators in terms of how our mental health system is meeting the needs that are out there. What work has been done, or is it a new area that we should perhaps launch into?

**Mr Helm:** I can comment on a couple of things. Some performance indicators we have been articulating over the last few years in the form of best practice documents that you might be familiar with. Some of our recent enhancements have focused on new best practices, such as assertive community treatment teams, intensive case management, housing-related supports, and all of those—

**Ms Lankin:** Could I just pop in another question, because we're almost out of time on that. Could you also tell us what you're doing to monitor the effect of these new enhancements that you've put in place?

**Mr Helm:** OK. In terms of the best practices I mentioned, we clearly identify the accountability mechanisms and the number of clients we expect to be served per case manager etc. We do have benchmarks in those, and we do monitor those through the operating plan processes and our ongoing interaction with—

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to intervene. Perhaps that can be concluded in the next round.

To the government side.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** In the last couple of years—and I can only speak for my riding, which is one of the most important ridings in Ontario, of course—as I have mentioned in this committee, a number of things have happened in our area, including a cath lab and your announcement of a new hospital, the bottom line being that patient care in our community is, and will continue to be, a priority. I'm most pleased that the ministry has seen fit to approve an MRI in my area, and I know that one of the reasons for that is the increase in population, but more so the increase in population of our seniors.

**1540**

I understand there are many concerns in Ontario about the shortage of MRIs, and I know that the previous governments did nothing to prepare for the influx of need for MRI service in this province. Again, in my area they have been trying to get an MRI for a number of years, the same as dialysis, some 15 years, a cath lab—we've tried for some 12, 15 years. As I said, some of the announcements that you have made regarding MRIs are certainly appreciated by the entire population.

I am aware that our government has invested extensively in expanding the MRI services, and I'd like you to provide us with some of the details, if you would, on your investments in MRI services in the entire province.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We have been quite diligently trying to ensure that we do respond to the growing needs of our population throughout the province, so that does mean that we are expanding the number of dialysis centres, and we are, of course, expanding the number of cancer centres and cardiac centres and MRIs, the magnetic resonance imaging services.

The status is that, from 1995 until the present time, the government has approved a total of machines to bring us to 37 in this province, and those are all expected to be operational either later this year or, in the case of Peterborough, we know it's going to be in early 2001.

However, we know that more MRIs are needed and so we have been reviewing our provincial MRI program. We are developing a revised policy to ensure that there will be continued access in the future. We hope to complete that review by the end of December this year. As you know, as independently governed organizations, hospital boards are responsible for managing their own priorities for new and replacement equipment, including MRI equipment. We do know that the federal government is going to be transferring some money next year, April 1, so we want to develop a priority-setting strategy for allocating these funds for medical equipment. Certainly the need for MRIs is there, and they will be included as part of our strategy.

What we've also done, which has had a significant impact on the services that are being offered in the province, is increase the operating funding. The operating funding was at \$150,000 per machine and that had been determined in November 1994 by the NDP. We have subsequently decided that more money was needed for operating funding, so we have increased the \$150,000 to \$800,000 a year to better reflect the cost of operating the MRI machine.

As I say, we are reviewing our plan, reviewing our policy, in order to ensure that people throughout this province will have expanded access to MRI services, in fact, access to all medical equipment that is needed at the present time.

**Mr Stewart:** Just a supplementary if I may: there was the tremendous announcement on Friday of the \$471 million regarding operational costs for hospitals, and the bottom line of that is the continuation of good quality patient care as a priority. In our case, where an MRI will be coming in 2001, do I assume that operational costs for that particular machine would be over and above what was announced to the hospital the other day?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask Mr King specifically to address that question.

**Mr King:** The new MRIs and the operating costs for the new MRIs was not announced in this recent announcement. That will be a future announcement, if that's specifically what your question is.

**Mr Stewart:** So the operations part of it would be announced when it is to be installed, and I believe it's on order at the present time.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right. I guess I should also add here, the announcement that was made last Friday

regarding the additional money for the hospitals in the province, as you know, really has doubled the commitment we've made to hospitals. We're now funding them at \$8.1 billion, as compared to \$6.8 billion in 1998-99. I would also hasten to add that there will be further funding going to hospitals in the province for growth funding as well as to priority programs. Those announcements will be made at a later date.

Certainly we have supported the hospitals very well. We have listened to the concerns, the issues, and this is well beyond what had been anticipated to flow.

**Mr Stewart:** Just for the record, Madam Minister, I want to make a comment that certainly some of the hospitals in the area where I am were tremendously pleased with this announcement. It's an announcement that was long overdue, and I think the commitment of this government to health care and patient care is just tremendous. I suggest, as I've suggested here before, that co-operation—working with you, the ministry and, indeed, the health care community—that's what it's all about and that's how we can develop the quality of care that the people deserve.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Thank you.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Just before my question, I wanted to applaud your announcement of last week, and London participated well in that announcement. London Health Sciences is certainly very grateful for the additional financial resources to St Joseph's Health Centre.

On to my question: in 1998 this government made a commitment in an announcement to expand long-term-care beds by 20,000 and to rebuild the over 15,000 existing beds with an investment of \$1.2 billion. Certainly one would suspect that would have quite an impact and there would be a reason why the government is moving in that direction. Can you explain in detail the intention, what the 20,000 new beds and the refurbishing of the existing over 15,000 would do to help in long-term planning for health care?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes, Mr Mazzilli. As you know, our government, when elected, recognized that we were the last province in Canada to take a look at the needs of our population and to embark on the restructuring of our system in order to accommodate the needs of our population.

We discovered that we had a growing and an aging population, and we also discovered that no long-term-care beds had been or were being built since 1988. In order to respond to the needs of our population, we consulted again, and progress that we've been making in the province is really largely based on the input and the consultation that we have with our stakeholders and the best advice that we receive from them. It was determined that 20,000 new beds were required for people in nursing homes and homes for the aged, and that was going to improve access to community-based services for an additional 100,000 Ontarians. At the same time, I might add, that was also going to create new full-time positions, not only front-line health jobs but also construction jobs so there's quite a tremendous impact there.



**1550**

I'm very pleased to say that originally our timeline was eight years for the construction of the 20,000 beds, and we have now accelerated the process. The beds are going to be up and running by 2004, which is six years after the announcement. To date, we have awarded almost 14,500 new beds, and I think you'll soon be seeing the third RFP for the 5,500 or so beds that remain.

We have streamlined the application process in consultation with our partners. We want to make sure that the process is easy and simple. We want everybody to be able to submit an application. You'll see that the new application cuts down on the paperwork.

There are some requirements that we have implemented based on recommendations we've received in order to ensure that the beds are operational in 2004. In this final round, we do require that applicants own or have an option on land. They must demonstrate that they have the financial ability to build the beds within the timeline.

We do believe, as well, that we've set up a dedicated group within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to help people through the process. We also now are working with the municipalities, because originally we did discover that some of the municipalities were holding up the construction of these beds, sometimes as long as 18 months, because of red tape. So I'm very pleased to say that this new team of staff, dedicated solely to the implementation of the 20,000 beds, is working with the awardees throughout the bed construction process in order to ensure that these municipal rezoning issues can be dealt with, and also that we do everything possible to facilitate the construction of these 20,000 beds.

We've been very pleased with the response, and we look forward to issuing the final RFP and making our announcements next spring.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Minister, we have a very severe shortage of nurses in the province of Ontario. We recently have heard from Dr Albert Schumacher, who is the president of the OMA, that in the last two years our government has made a good effort to turn around a situation that had been allowed to deteriorate in the health care system for 10 years. That was Albert Schumacher who said that; that's not me.

**Ms Lankin:** I spoke with him yesterday, too, Mr Wettlaufer. That's not quite what he said to me.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Well, that's what he was quoted as saying.

Anyway, a friend of ours moved to New Orleans over 10 years ago when she was unable to get a nursing job in Ontario because the then-government had frozen the new hiring positions. She has since moved on to Texas, where she is a nursing supervisor at the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital. She has been approached many times about coming back and she has refused to. In fact, most recently her letter to the approaching hospital was, "You should have approached me more than 10 years ago when I was forced to move to the United States."

We've heard over and over, in discussions that I've had and I'm sure you have had with experts in the medical community, that it could take as much as 20 years from 1995 to rectify a situation that had been allowed to deteriorate for 10 years. I wonder, in light of the fact that we are pouring billions of extra dollars into the health care system, what are we doing, what can we do, to recruit and retain nurses in this province?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We did become aware of the fact that there was a problem related to recruitment and retention of nurses. In response to the requests of people in the nursing profession, whether the Ontario Nurses' Association or the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, in response to their concerns of feeling undervalued and overworked, we set up the Nursing Task Force in 1998. As you know, nurses had an opportunity to participate in that committee. They had the opportunity to bring forward recommendations to the government, which they did. I believe that was a very positive and a very co-operative process. I'm also pleased that, as a result of the work that was done by that Nursing Task Force that included the nurses, we did respond immediately to all of their recommendations.

We did commit to spend \$375 million in the process of recruiting and retaining nurses. We made a commitment to hire more than the 10,000 nurses that the task force had suggested were going to be necessary. We did also commit to ensuring that nurse practitioners were going to be available to work in the province of Ontario. Since that time, there has been a tremendous amount of work go on in order to deal with the whole issue of retention and recruitment of nurses.

I will ask George to speak to you, because he has been continuing to meet with nurses on an ongoing basis. In fact, I should tell you that we have given the RNAO money in order that they can be involved directly in the recruitment and retention initiative. You might want to speak to that first.

**Mr George Zegarac:** George Zegarac, the executive director for the integrated policy and planning division. I think Kathleen MacMillan, chief nursing officer, referenced a number of investments that we're making in terms of being able to flow funding to the employers to hire those nurses as quickly as possible. All that money is flowed.

As the minister referenced, we're also working very closely with all the nursing organizations, including the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, to look at investing funding into recruitment initiatives, including job fairs and a job hotline, and the nursing associations are working with employers to facilitate hiring as quickly as possible. We're providing counselling to nurses to look at how to prepare their resumé and how to prepare for some of the interviews.

In addition to the funding that we put forward—the half-million dollars last year and another half-million this year to those organizations to support recruitment—we're also providing funding toward training. One of the



problems we're having is that in some cases we have nurses, but we don't have nurses with the appropriate specialized training. We've committed \$10 million toward training initiatives and working with those associations to provide the additional training, whether it be critical care training or mental health training, toward those areas that are specified in terms of having critical shortages of specialized skills. Those are some of the initiatives that we have underway.

We continue to meet with the Joint Provincial Nursing Council, which is a joint committee of nursing organizations and the ministry, to look at ongoing strategies to improve our recruitment initiatives. We have monthly meetings where we meet with strategic individuals in recruitment initiatives and come up with additional ongoing initiatives.

**The Chair:** You have one minute remaining.

**Mr Zegarac:** OK. So we look at, on an ongoing basis, opportunities to improve our recruitment initiatives.

**The Chair:** You have approximately 45 seconds. Forgo? OK, we'll turn to the opposition side.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I do want to recognize, as we leave the nursing issue, that the minister and the ministry certainly have had a lot of work to do to overcome the effect of the Premier's comments about nurses being as dispensable as hula hoops. So we can admire the challenge which they've confronted.

I want to go back to hospitals. I didn't think I would need to, but after Friday's announcement there are a couple more questions which I do want to raise. I do want to thank you for having tabled the information today which clearly shows the \$235 million in last year's funding that flowed this year, which is what I was trying to get at earlier.

I'm going to try and do this quickly because there are so many other areas I'd like to get on to. The estimated figure that we've been looking at in the estimates book for hospital spending in this current year is almost \$8 billion. On Friday it was announced that you would be spending \$8.1 billion. Can I assume that the additional \$100 million that has suddenly appeared would be the result of OHIP transfers for emergency room coverage where they opt into the alternate plans and they're no longer billing OHIP? We anticipated that you were looking to save about \$100 million through OHIP transfers. If that's not the source of the \$100 million, will you tell me where you got \$100 million last Friday?

1600

**Mr King:** What I'd like to comment on, first of all, is the printed estimates for the hospitals portion that says \$7.9 billion. That's the number that you're dealing with?

**Mrs McLeod:** Right.

**Mr King:** Rounded off, \$8 million. Then the changes as far as the increases is what we have recently announced about the \$450 million. So the change in the estimates will be the \$8.425 billion, for the hospitals portion.

**Mrs McLeod:** But you announced Friday that you would be spending—the minister, and she's with you

today—\$8.1 billion on hospitals this year, which is \$100 million over the estimates figure that's here.

**Ms Michelle DiEmanuele:** Michelle DiEmanuele, the chief administrative officer for the ministry. The \$7.9 billion that's in the printed estimates as it stands now: of course, you realize we'll be filing supplementary estimates as well to this. At that point in time, the indication of the increase in this particular line will be there.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that. So will you tell me where it's from? Unless you've been given \$100 million by the Treasurer, that money has to come from somewhere else in the health budget. Where did you get \$100 million?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** We'll be filing supplementary estimates and this line will be affected.

**Mrs McLeod:** Yes, but so will every other line if you have to dig somewhere for \$100 million. Are you not able to share with us how you found another \$100 million on Friday?

**Mr Daniel Burns:** There will be an increase to the base estimates of the ministry and not a transfer from other program spending activities that the ministry is presently responsible for.

**Mrs McLeod:** That the ministry is presently responsible for, which could include OHIP transfers.

**Mr Burns:** It will not be.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It will not be. It is additional.

**Mrs McLeod:** Since you know categorically it won't be from OHIP, are you able to tell me what it will be transferred from?

**Mr Burns:** I may have been muttering a little bit at the beginning. The additional funds for hospitals are not the result of transferring resources from any other ministry activity or program. They are the result of additional funds provided for this part of our estimates in-year.

**Mrs McLeod:** You mean the \$22 billion allocation for health has now been increased in the provincial budget?

**Mr Burns:** Yes. The details of that and how they work, as the CAO just indicated, will be reflected in our supplementary estimates.

**Mrs McLeod:** So the \$22 billion figure we will see adjusted as well?

**Mr Burns:** Yes.

**Mrs McLeod:** OK. Can I ask then, since we know that of the \$8.1 billion in spending, \$235 million is actually money that was announced last year and was flowed earlier in the year and, I understand, on Friday you indicated that \$80 million was one-time funding as opposed to base funding of the \$471 million, would we, nevertheless—and this is a leading question—expect to see hospital spending of at least \$8.1 billion in the next budget year?

**Mr Burns:** The next budget year?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you mean 2000-01?

**Mrs McLeod:** No, I mean 2001-02. I told you it was a leading question.

**Mr Burns:** The Minister of Finance and his officials are pretty strict about disclosure of those sorts of discussions.

**Mrs McLeod:** I want to get the question on record so we establish the fact that \$8.1 billion is the spending on hospitals that is in the current year.

I wanted to ask you about the allocation of dollars. I'm pleased for the members who are able to say, "Our hospitals did very well." We've not been able to find any rationale for which hospitals received money and which hospitals didn't receive money. We've identified to this point at least 50 hospitals which received no mention at all on Friday. We've certainly seen no evidence of the application of the funding formula that the OHA has been working on with you for some time. I'd appreciate any explanation which might help us in our future analysis of these numbers.

**Mr King:** I think first of all it's important that you realize that the funding that has been announced for hospitals has been a series of announcements that really began last December. The \$196 million that was announced last December was used for the equity funding formula that you speak of. The new funding formula that the OHA has discussed has not been implemented at this point, but we do have an equity funding formula that has been used for distribution of the \$196 million.

The \$235 million that did occur near the end of last year was to assist hospitals on a one-time basis for operating pressures. All hospitals this year received an increase. So I think it's important that everyone understand that everyone did receive a 2% increase across the board. As I mentioned before at one of these sessions, we received the operating plans. Each hospital then indicates in the operating plan how they perceive that they will be doing by year-end. We then went through those line by line for each of the hospitals in the province.

They did take into consideration the 2% increase that they had already received. Again, I have to emphasize that every hospital in the province received an increase of 2% this year.

**Mrs McLeod:** Could I just ask you where I will find the additions that will show me that 2% increase? Because I know the numbers all add up to \$471 million in Friday's announcement and I know there are at least 50 hospitals, probably more, that aren't mentioned, so I assume the 2% increases across the board are not in Friday's announcement.

**Mr King:** No.

**Mrs McLeod:** But then I don't know where they are because I don't know where the extra dollars have come from.

**Mr King:** The actual increases are in the \$699.269 million in the estimates for this year. That was the June announcement. That was already in the estimates, as the minister has mentioned. This new announcement is new money and will be reflected accordingly in the new estimates. The 2% across the board in June was announced for all hospitals.

**Mrs McLeod:** And would be a total of how much money?

**Mr King:** It's approximately \$153 million.

**Mrs McLeod:** That's separate from the \$471—

**Mr King:** That was in June.

**Mrs McLeod:** I realize that.

**Mr King:** I just wanted to be clear because some of these numbers we all got confused on when they were announced.

**Mrs McLeod:** Sometimes the additions come out differently depending on which estimates you use.

**Mr King:** I'm also trying to, in my mind, go through the various announcements, so I apologize if I'm coming across that way.

**Mrs McLeod:** Probably the easiest thing to do would be if we could see something tabled that would show us, as this does very clearly, just what the hospital funding is so we're not trying to verbally follow that.

**Mr King:** I think we can review that information and come back.

I did want to explain the first question on the operating plans that were submitted. We did review each of them line by line and then adjustments were made accordingly, based on the perceived outcomes for this year.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that. In passing—and it is going to be in passing, because I want to get to some other areas—I would assume that means, then, that the initial response to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp that they should be able to manage with their existing funds last spring has been proven, on review of the equity situation, to not be the case, since they have that fully funded. Of course, I'm pleased to see that.

I want to talk about a statement or response that was made, Minister, to an issue that came up on private use of hospital MRIs. You were going to investigate queue-jumping and the inappropriate use by hospitals of publicly funded MRIs for private paying individuals. I'm wondering whether you've completed your investigation, what the findings and conclusions are and whether those can be tabled with us.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes, I'll have Mr King respond to that, because I know staff did follow up on that issue.

**Mr King:** There were two situations last year where there were accusations of payment for MRIs by private individuals. In both situations, the hospitals did a thorough investigation of this. What occurs in those hospitals is that, as you know, the hospitals can use the MRI for a third party. In certain circumstances, and we haven't received a full number of patients, but there was some confusion whether a patient did pay for that service or not. It was all done by a third party. The hospitals have been instructed that any MRI in Ontario is not to be used for any private payment. This was an error that occurred in the hospital and we feel that has been rectified in the policies. But the policy here is that no MRI machine will be used for private payment, and they have been thoroughly investigated.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that.

I'm going to ask a couple of very quick questions. The homes for special care review that's going on with the community and social services ministry: all I'm looking for is an anticipated date of tabling.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Helm will respond.



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**Mr Helm:** I assume that you're referring to the housing model that's been looked at between the two ministries?

**Mrs McLeod:** Yes.

**Mr Helm:** The consultations have just been completed across the province—

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm sorry to be putting you under pressure, but I really have so many areas. Just an anticipated date, so we know when to look for it.

**Mr Helm:** I anticipate that the recommendations will be going forward later this calendar year.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I'm going to jump from area to area. Any estimated figure for the cost of the smart card program?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, I'm going to ask Michelle or the deputy to respond.

**Mr Burns:** The general smart card program of the government is, first of all, the responsibility of Management Board Secretariat. What we've been doing essentially is collaborating with them on some parts that affect our part of thinking about the introduction of this type of technology and its use. We're not in a position to give a broad general answer to that, and on the specifics of how it might impact us, that's yet to be fully determined.

**Mrs McLeod:** The development of any smart card technology would tie into privacy legislation, I assume? We won't see one before the other?

**Mr Burns:** The final settlement of what technologies are the best to use and, by extension, what legislative and regulatory steps have to be taken to enable it are very important issues that are in the hands of Management Board. Those parts that affect us will fall out from the decisions made on their fundamentals.

**Mrs McLeod:** I want to ask some questions about rehabilitation. I wish I had a full 20-minute segment on rehab, so let me try and focus my questions as much as possible. I want to know, if possible, how many schedule 5 clinics are operating in the province. I'd like to know how many schedule 5 clinics have recently, say within the last three years, been sold and how many of those have been sold to large private corporations. I would like to know how many G-code clinics are operating in the province now and how many have closed within the last year to two years. I'd like to know whether the budget for G-code clinics, the billings, would still be \$17 million and whether or not there is discussion about the reallocation of that \$17 million. Obviously, I'm going to just table a whole lot of questions and see where we can go with it. I would be very interested in knowing what the total budget is for rehab and how you figure a budget out. I'll indicate in advance that I'm not going to give you the balance of my 20 minutes to answer all those questions.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask Mary Catherine Lindberg, the ADM, to respond.

**Ms Mary Catherine Lindberg:** I don't have those numbers at my fingertips, the number of schedule 5s that have been sold and the number of schedule 5s that have

gone out of business. It's not a lot. They've been functioning. But we have a cap. We don't allow any more new schedule 5s to be formed. Some have amalgamated and some have sold over the last two years, but we'll get back to you with that.

**Mrs McLeod:** I would appreciate that. The reason I ask—obviously I'm concerned about the disappearance of publicly funded clinics. I know there's a rehab strategy going on. I'm going to be very anxious to see the results of that, if you can get me any budgetary figures that will give us some benchmarks in which to look at whether or not any restructuring of rehabilitation services has meant a loss of publicly funded services or whether the money is being redirected, whether to hospitals or other areas. I'm not going to pursue the question, simply because I know the strategy is still being developed. I guess what I'm looking for are benchmark numbers that we know how to deal with. I did have some information that eight schedule 5 licences have recently been sold to large corporations, and I'm most concerned about that.

I have a number of other questions on physio but I don't think I'm going to have time to get to those.

I'm very appreciative of the fact that my colleague Ms Lankin asked the question about the divestment costs on mental health. I'll admit I'm surprised to see any divestment costs in this year's estimates because of the minister's commitment that there would not be the closure of a single mental health bed until community services were in place. I'm having difficulty reconciling the appearance of divestment. Minister, do you not think it's a bit early to be divesting?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, I would ask Dennis to respond to that specifically.

**Mr Helm:** The divestment of the psychiatric hospitals has been outlined in a number of our strategies over the last number of years: internally making it happen, putting people first, talking about the need to move the psychiatric hospitals more into the continuum of health services across the province. Most of the stakeholders agreed with that direction. The divestments, then, through the HSRC recommendations, take us along that route, to really pull the mental health services for the seriously mentally ill into the true services—

**Mrs McLeod:** My question was a very straightforward one. The minister's commitment was made after the health services commission's recommendation. The psychiatric hospital in my community closed four months after the commission tabled its recommendation. I am very appreciative of the minister's leadership in saying that that is much too quick a schedule and that there would not be closures until community supports were in place. When I see divestment costs, what concerns me is that it looks as though a decision has been made that the community supports are in place. We know that's not true in our communities. I'm asking for an assurance that the commitment stands and that there are not going to be any beds closed down before community supports are in place, which means we're not going to see a loss of beds



in this current fiscal year despite the fact that there's a divestment fund here. Again, we don't have benchmarks.

Let me ask you one specific question about community supports. Why is there no funding for the STEP program in Whitby? This is clearly a community program. It was directly funded by the Ministry of Health. It's been cut. To me, we're moving backwards on community supports in some areas, not forward.

**Mr Helm:** The commitment stands that there won't be any bed closures until community supports are in place. We've had a number of announcements over the last year in terms of community supports in various parts of the province.

**Mrs McLeod:** And the Whitby program, the STEP program?

**Mr Helm:** I couldn't comment specifically on the STEP program in terms of the—

**Mrs McLeod:** There's a letter on the minister's desk that has been there for some time, so I'll anticipate a response there.

The reason I'm rushing a little bit is because I have other areas, but my colleague has been incredibly patient and has a question that he is anxious to ask. I want to make sure you have some minutes.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** Thanks. Minister, there's one line that appears constantly through the estimates, and that's transportation and communications. It seems that there's a substantial increase. When you look at all the budget lines, there seems to be close to a \$10-million increase. What is transportation and communications?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I'm going to ask John Bozzo, our head of communications. Within that line, a number of expenditures would occur related to communication services—

**Mr Peters:** Does that mean the mailers that come to my door?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** It could. It would also include areas associated with travel etc, and other expenses of doing business.

**Mr Peters:** How much of this \$59 million would be for advertising?

**Ms DiEmanuele:** I'll let our chief of communications answer that specifically.

**Mr John Bozzo:** John Bozzo, director of communications. In terms of advertising, in last year's budget it was a \$5.2-million expenditure for advertising.

**Mr Peters:** And how much is anticipated for this year?

**Mr Bozzo:** We're tracking at about \$5 million to \$6 million, around there.

**Mr Peters:** Could I get the specific number, please, eventually?

**Mr Bozzo:** Sure, we can submit that.

**Mr Peters:** On page 83 there's \$4.7 million for sign language interpretation. I find it interesting that it comes under mental health, but does this \$4.7 million allow the ministry to comply with the Eldridge decision, or how much more money is going to be needed to comply with

the 1998 Eldridge decision to provide sign language interpreter services at hospitals?

**Mr Helm:** The \$4.7 million, as a result of the Eldridge case, will allow us to enhance services for the hearing impaired, for mental health services and for substance abuse services. In addition, about \$2 million of that \$4.7 million will be to assist in enhancing interpreter services for people to access general health care across the province. We're working with the Canadian Hearing Society in terms of rolling that out. It will be over a period of time because of the availability of interpreters, so we'll have to monitor and evaluate just how extensively we can deliver that service and if it is meeting most of the need out there or what the gaps are. It will be an ongoing evaluation of the hearing society.

**Mr Peters:** When was the last time there was an increase in the \$75 bed grant to compensate municipalities? Is there an increase anticipated to compensate municipalities for increased costs of services?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Are you talking about nursing homes and homes for the aged?

**Mr Peters:** I'm talking about the line that appears in nursing homes, mental health, general hospitals.

**Mr King:** That number is \$75 per bed, as you said. I don't know when it was last increased but we can endeavour to find out that information and get back to you.

1620

**Mr Peters:** You don't have that?

**Mr King:** No, I'm sorry, we don't have that information here as to when it was last increased.

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

**Ms Lankin:** One question I'd just like to put on the record, and the ministry can respond to the committee at a later date. Last week I was asking some questions around the primary health care pilot projects that had been set up. Assistant Deputy Minister Lindberg was talking about the eight pilot projects that are there. I was wondering if you would provide us with details of the structure of each of those: the number of physicians—one had 19; another had 3—how many of them have the nurse practitioner position filled; and what, if any, other health professionals are involved. So generally, the personnel structure of them and the details of the funding arrangement—I don't know how detailed that can be—what the nature of the capitalization is, that sort of thing, and at this point in time what the patient enrolment looks like in general, just so we can understand a little bit better what those pilot projects look like.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We can get that information to you, hopefully in a way that it will be meaningful.

**Ms Lankin:** OK, thank you.

Just quickly, with respect to the hospital funding, Mr King, I didn't understand exactly your answer to Mrs McLeod. The new allocation that was announced on Friday—I will mention that I found it odd that at some of the local hospitals there were backbench members there, as opposed to cabinet ministers of the government, making announcements and aware of that. Normally those

sorts of things are done by cabinet, and where there are opportunities for local MPPs to be involved at the time of announcement, MPPs of all parties are informed. I think you might have had an oversight there. I happened to be at the local hospital while it was happening because I was taking my mother in for her geriatric appointment.

I have raised this issue with Mr King, and I'll spell it out for you as well, Minister, in a minute. I'm not clear about your answer to Mrs McLeod about the new money that was announced and how it relates to the operational plans that have been filed by hospitals, and the decision-making about which hospitals were going to get part of that allocation, in particular because we're aware of a number of hospitals that have projected deficits that are larger than the new allocations they received. I know there's always a negotiations process in this, and understanding what is the real deficit and what desired service levels you'd like to meet, but some of them seem really far off in terms of the money they were allotted and the projected deficits they have. Could you explain that process?

**Mr King:** As I mentioned before, when we receive the operating plans there are a number of assumptions that are made by the hospitals at that time with respect to how much revenue they will receive, or beginning of new programs etc. That's how they develop their projected deficit for the year. Not all of those are approved. We may put those off for another year, depending on funding. So some of the hospitals are still reporting some of the deficits based on what they anticipated their deficit would be. Not all of those dollars were approved, and that would explain why some of them are still outstanding.

**Ms Lankin:** That's enough of an explanation, actually. Thank you. That clarifies that for me.

Minister, I just want to say to you that having raised the issue of specialized geriatric services and the loss of some of those services in community hospitals because of priority settings by those community hospitals, I've had an opportunity to explain the situation at greater length to Mr King. What I would like to ask of you is to take a look at this issue and understand that if hospitals are deciding it's not a priority to back up and support geriatrician services—that's overhead and those sorts of things—we will lose geriatrician services in the province, because OHIP can't cover the cost. When it takes an hour to an hour and a half to spend with a senior, particularly a senior with dementia, to examine, to get through, to understand all the health problems, to deal with the family, an OHIP billing can never—first, the doctor will go bankrupt. What I would like to ask is for you to consider this issue and consider either dedicated funding for delivery of those services through the hospitals or alternative payment plans for geriatricians delivering services in the hospitals.

To be clear, I'm not talking about the regional geriatric plans, phase one of the geriatric services plan that was set out; I'm talking about steps that we've never gotten to in terms of delivery of those services in com-

munity hospitals. I'll leave that with you because I've provided more information to Mr King. He's been very helpful in explaining to me his review of it thus far, but I think at some point it will take the minister to take a look at this issue, and I would ask you to do that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just in response to that question, I want to put on the record that we have convened an expert panel to seek advice on how to best enhance access to the specialized geriatric services. We've made a very strong commitment to ensure that the appropriate health services will be there for our older adults. We recognize the need to take action, and we are and we will be.

**Ms Lankin:** In fact, when I raised this last time I did raise the fact of that expert panel, so I was aware of it. What I'm pointing out to you is that daily services are being lost by community hospitals setting their priorities. Unless we have a provincial program and a provincial strategy around the retention of those services in our community hospitals, we'll be losing the talent before an expert panel gives you some recommendations.

**Mr King:** As I mentioned before, Mary Catherine Lindberg and myself are reviewing this as far as retention of physicians in many parts of the province, including community hospitals, and looking at a way of working with the hospitals and the physicians together for retention and overhead costs etc. That would include some sort of alternative funding program or alternative payment. So I think we're all on the same page this way. It's just that we need to review each of these cases in particular.

**Ms Lankin:** But what also needs to happen—and perhaps the work of the expert panel might bolster this within the ministry—is a priority placed on the delivery of these services, because in the world of acute-care hospitals the elderly are not understood as a different entity. They come in and their disease or their injury is treated. Like pediatric services, there is a whole person there with a range of complicated problems and it requires a different strategy. We are losing that when we lose these talented geriatricians. In the priority setting within the hospitals, and the difference between strategies for neurologists versus geriatricians and all of the competition that goes on in the professional world, this area of specialized geriatric services is losing out. I take the minister at her word in terms of her commitment on this. I'm only trying to stress an urgency that we are losing it daily in decisions being taken out there in autonomous arenas where they have their own priority-setting power. So it's like waving a flag.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It really is. There's a disproportionate rate of growth among people over the age of 75. I think there are about 18,000 people per year. Certainly it is creating pressures, and we're going to be responding to those pressures for the need to make sure that we do have the specialized geriatric services available in the province for those growing numbers.

**Ms Lankin:** Thank you. Chair, how much time do I have left?



**The Chair:** You have approximately 11½ minutes.

**Ms Lankin:** I'd like to move to long-term care and a number of questions that had already been placed on the record. I want to perhaps supplement some of the information with some specific questions.

My first question is for information to be tabled, not answered here today. Conservative estimates right now of the combined deficit in the CCACs is around \$100 million. I recognize there are some CCACs with surpluses out of last year, but a number with projected deficits, and there is an estimate. That information is not accessible to the public in the way in which they're structured in their relationship with the ministry. They report back through to the ministry. I would appreciate it if the minister would commit to provide committee members with the information you have about projected deficits and the size of the deficits. The minister is nodding her head, so that's helpful. Thank you.

1630

**Mr King:** I could comment, yes, we will look at that as much as we have at this time for that information. We're just reviewing those programs at this time.

**Ms Lankin:** What I want to ask you about is the enhancement funding that the minister has announced. From the best of our information in talking directly to CCACs, the enhancement money that has been announced does not cover the combined projected deficits. I understand there are some regional differences and that makes it complicated when we don't have the numbers right in front of us, but here's the concern, and I'm wondering how the minister is going to address it.

The deficits are made up of a number of things. They're made up of service pressures, existing demand in the community, existing service pressures under the existing rules of caps on service and everything like that. They're made up of pressures around salaries and wages, because there has not been an increase in salaries and wages in the agencies for a long, long time, and they're made up around pressures for pay equity which have not to this point been funded by the government, the pay equity obligations that the CCACs and their transfer payment agencies have.

I fail to understand how we are actually going to see an increase in the services provided, ie, more services to more people, if the transfers being made thus far can't meet the existing demand, pay for an increase in wages and fund pay equity pressures that are in the system.

There were comments last week from Ms Kardos Burton that those are pressures that are being reviewed for community health centres and CCACs and others. Those pressures, the pay equity pressures and the wage pressures, have been there for a number of years now and we cannot anticipate any increase in service delivery if we can't take care of the wage pressures, the pay equity pressures and the service backlog.

Second, it compounds the problem in terms of the ability to provide service, to have qualified staff to do it. We are hearing—and we've seen reports from the community sector—that there is a looming crisis. They can't

hire people, whether it be nurses or home care support staff, at those wage levels, and particularly with openings coming up on the facility side and in the hospitals, people are flooding to those sectors.

We've got a wage gap, lack of wage increases, pay equity not funded, service demands out there not being met and increased enhanced services that we would like to provide. How? What is the strategy of the ministry to meet all of those demands?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just as a start, we need to recognize the fact that our government has demonstrated a very clear commitment to ensuring that there will be long-term care and community services available to all Ontarians. We did indicate in 1998 when we made our funding announcement of \$1.2 billion, which included 20,000 new long-term-care beds, another \$551 million contained within that number was for community services, and we are moving forward. We are moving forward to ensure that that commitment is met. Just recently I did announce an additional \$92.5 million to expand community care further.

But you're right: there is tremendous pressure. We have been meeting again with stakeholders in that sector. We want to ensure that services are available to all people in Ontario. We also need to recognize that as far as Canada is concerned, we are a leader in this province. We are presently providing in the way of home care spending \$128 per capita. Next is Manitoba with \$97 per capita. We're the only province that doesn't charge a direct fee—

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, could I interrupt you. You have provided that information in the past, so I do understand what you've been attempting to do. I'm talking about what's perhaps not working yet with respect to that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Sure. Mr King could give you further information.

**Mr King:** I think it's important to note that by year-end last year, we'd managed all of the CCAC budget situations within the allocation—

**Ms Lankin:** No, I'm aware of that. It's the situation that's to do with this year.

**Mr King:** —and this year we're reviewing those pressures that we have with the hospitals, and we're well aware of what's happening with them. We're just formulating—

**Ms Lankin:** OK, Mr King, I'm going to interrupt you, because that's not a strategy for the future; that's the ongoing review.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, this is separate.

**Mr King:** No, this is quite separate from the CCAC review. As the hospitals receive their operating plans on a regular basis, we are doing the same with the CCACs. We are looking at their pressures for this year, and we are addressing them and we will have recommendations to the minister in the very near future on that.

**Ms Lankin:** Mr Chair, how long do I have?

**The Chair:** You have approximately five minutes.

**Ms Lankin:** You made reference to the CCAC review, the review of the competitive bidding process. We



understand that review has been taking place. I'll express my disappointment that it has not been more public. I understand the players who have been at the table and have met with a number of them and heard about their views of that review. We had expected that that review would be completed I think last week some time. Is that review completed?

**Mr King:** This review is not complete, and Price-waterhouseCoopers are dealing with that. A number of CCACs and a number of players in the field are involved in this. There is quite a widespread consultation process occurring right now. I don't have the exact date of when it's planned for completion. Mary Kardos Burton is here, who's spearheading that.

**Ms Lankin:** I just want a date; I don't want any other explanations at this point in time. Sorry, we're just running out of time. I know it's rude, and I don't mean to be rude; it's the only time we get to ask you guys questions.

**Ms Mary Kardos Burton:** Late November or early December.

**Ms Lankin:** Thank you, and you may have to come back. Do you know how much it costs for Price Waterhouse?

**Mr King:** I'm going to have to come back on that, see if that information is available.

**Ms Lankin:** OK, I'd appreciate if you would provide that.

Minister, one of the things that is being recommended from the community sector in terms of dealing with the types of pressures they face is that you develop a differential fee formula or compensation for services for subacute care patients, ie, those patients who are being released from hospital, post-surgery, that sort of thing, and the services they need versus the kinds of services the long-term-care clients need, those services that help provide the steady well-being approach of keeping a person healthy in their home and out of facilities.

The current cap that has been placed on services is a real problem and a real deterrent, particularly for long-term-care patients, to provide the level of services required as an alternative to institutionalization. Have you looked at this recommendation? Have you given any consideration to how it might be implemented? Could you give your thoughts on that request from the community sector?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As I've stated on several occasions, as we move forward, we listen to the stakeholders, and obviously that request and that information certainly is considered at the same time as we take a look at reviewing the support to the community care access centres.

**Ms Lankin:** I have a copy of correspondence from the Ontario Community Support Association. This is from last summer that this request was put forward to you. Their briefing note is from June 2000. It's based on the paper they did. It's their review of the effects of managed competition model. They wanted an independent and impartial review. They're not thrilled with the way in

which the review is being conducted. They're party to it. They know that they've had some influence on it. They would have liked to have seen that more public and some of the clients have an opportunity to provide comment on it. But they specifically said you need to move to equalize the compensation and working conditions of workers—I've addressed that issue—between this sector and the facility sector, and you need to provide a funding mechanism to recognize the two very different services: funding for acute care clients and funding for long-term-care services. This recommendation has been with the ministry for five months now.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It is part of the CCAC review, Ms Lankin.

**Ms Lankin:** That particular request for the two funding—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That issue.

**Ms Lankin:** Terrific. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Now to the government.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, a change in philosophy that the government has undertaken is preventive health care, and one of the things that we see in the emergency rooms of hospitals is that there are more and more people going in looking to have viruses treated, most notably flu. Flu is a big issue and has been for the last couple of winters, anyway. I wonder if the ministry is undertaking any kind of advertising, undertaking any kind of programs, to ensure that people get flu shots. I'm not talking about workers in long-term-care facilities, I know that that is being done; I'm talking about the general populace. What kind of advertising is being done to make them aware that they should be getting flu shots?

1640

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll start the response, and then I'm going to ask Dr D'Cunha to continue, since he certainly had a leadership role in the development of the free vaccination program that we're undertaking this year and also in making sure that we communicate and educate the public about getting a free flu shot.

For the first time in this province, we are offering this year a free flu shot to every individual in the province. It's the first time it has ever been undertaken, in fact, in any jurisdiction in North America. We've set aside about \$38 million in order to make sure that this happens. We know that if people do receive the flu shot, obviously it's going to relieve the pressure on the emergency rooms. However, we need to also make sure that people are aware of the program, know where they can get the flu shots and when they should be going.

I'll ask Dr D'Cunha to follow up, because he has been taking a leading role in this.

**Dr Colin D'Cunha:** I will offer introductory comments and then turn it over to my colleague Mr John Bozzo to pick up on the specifics.

When the program was first announced, the plan was to expand it, building up on the strength of the traditional high-risk program that all of us in Canada and in the rest of North America were in—which was targeting people over the age of 65, people who are institutionalized for

any cause, people with chronic health or medical conditions whose immune systems may not be functioning at optimal capacity, health care workers including hospital workers, long-term-care facilities and emergency service respondents.

Upon expansion to the general population this year, all jurisdictions in North America faced a unique challenge. There was some difficulty on the part of manufacturers to make one of the three components of the changing three components in flu vaccine—very specifically the A Panama strain. We were fortunate in Canada in that both the Canadian suppliers had assured all orders of government—namely federal and all provincial and territorial governments—that this did not pose a problem. However, the delivery schedule would be such that we would be all be getting the vaccine shipped to us by November 15.

The unique implementation challenge that all of us faced this year was to first ensure that our high-risk groups, the traditional recipients of the program, got the vaccine first, and use the traditional methods that we have used to date. Essentially, about 3.44 million doses came in September, as contracted, from our supplier, and was distributed through the public health system to Ontario health units for onward transmission to our various providers: physicians, nurse practitioners, long-term-care facilities and hospitals, to name a few.

Earlier this morning I was notified by the manufacturer that they have been able to ramp up, based on early release from the federal government, flu vaccine for delivery to the province of Ontario for the general public. So 1.6 million doses were released this morning, and another approximately million doses are being released early next week. Under the original plan, we were scheduled to go with our general population launch on or about November 15, the date always being conditional on the Bureau of Biologics release.

The good news of today essentially has turned it into a challenge for my colleague Mr Bozzo to now ramp up the social marketing and communication plan to make the program known to general Ontario residents, some of whom would have paid it in the past, some of whom in the past would not have thought about that old phrase, “An ounce of prevention is worth pound of cure.”

John, I turn it over to you.

**Mr Bozzo:** Thanks, Colin, and I’m happy to report that we’re ready at the gate; we launched the program over the last weekend.

As the minister and Colin have indicated, it’s important to note that the high-risk groups have been quite aware of this program in the past, but for the general population, this is a very new program and the first in North America. Whenever you launch this kind of communications effort, the first part of that challenge is to build awareness with that population of what’s being made available, how it’s being made available, when they can get their shot and the importance of getting the shot.

We know in public health communications activities there are always lots of myths out there about the par-

ticular initiative that you’re endeavouring to convince them about. The campaign that you’re going to be seeing over the next four to six weeks focuses primarily on the general population group. It has health professionals in the field in infectious disease, and emergency room nurses as well as other doctors etc, who are talking about the benefits of getting the flu shot. I certainly hope that everyone here will be considering getting their flu shot and contributing to—

**Ms Lankin:** There is a free clinic in this building in a couple of weeks’ time.

**Mr Bozzo:** Great. I hope everyone’s lining up.

We’ll be focusing on making the information available to them about where the clinics are in their communities. One of the things we know from these kinds of campaigns is that choice of location is absolutely critical to getting people to move. So there is a very extensive workplace program. We have a number of large employers who have also signed up and will be offering clinics to their employees—OPG, for example, Magna and a number of other large corporations have already signed on and are running clinics. We’ve got great support from the public health units. They’re running campaigns throughout the entire month of November. Hospitals have already been running clinics extensively in the Toronto area and in the regions. The public health units will be continuing to do public clinics as we move through November.

There is advertising that you’ll be seeing on television; there will be a print campaign which will be supporting that with trying to get the information out about the myths around the flu—that you can’t get the flu from the flu shot, and a number of things like that; there will also be some radio ads going out which will be reminding people to actually book their clinics; and there will be some announcer-read ads, which will be indicating specific clinics in your neighbourhood. So it’s quite an extensive program. It’s a very cost-effective way of getting to people. It’s a very important public issue, and one that requires a fairly extensive social marketing effort behind it.

**Mr Stewart:** Before I ask my question, I wanted to tell you that I did get my flu shot last Friday—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Stewart:** I got it because I’m old; that’s the reason.

It’s interesting—I’ve had a number of calls at the office from people who are concerned about, “Am I going to get the flu after I get it? I don’t like needles. I don’t like this, that and the other thing.” But I can assure you that the type of program you’re doing is wonderful.

I want to go back to CCACs for a moment. I am a great believer in the CCACs and how they’re doing. It’s my understanding that the ministry is initiating a program review. I believe the CCACs are a vehicle that could develop a number of programs in the health care field that might be very advantageous to the community. One in the particular area I am in that is being looked at, but certainly has not been approved or anything, by the



CCACs—as you know, some of the area that I'm involved in is rural, and there is a shortage of doctors. The CEO of the CCAC, as well as a couple of the doctors and some politicians, including myself, and some health care deliverers are involved in looking at a program where the CCAC might have responsibility for taking or delegating doctors to go into some of these underserved areas on either a half-day basis or a daily basis. Doctors are very supportive of it and I think it might, in a way, alleviate some of the problems there because the CCAC is the body that knows what is needed in some of these more rural areas in regard to health care.

It's just something they're looking at. Maybe down the road when we get it fully developed, it might be a project or a program that the ministry might consider. I think it has some tremendous potential in helping to solve some of the underserved areas. When you get the physicians behind it, that in itself is a plus. Anyway, it's my understanding that you are initiating a program review. I would ask you to explain to the committee why this program review is necessary and indeed what you hope to accomplish by it.

1650

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The CCAC program review is underway, and I think we've responded already that Pricewaterhouse Coopers is indeed undertaking the review it began in the summer. We hear that it's going to be completed in late November or December. What we want to do is—number one, the purpose of the program review is to determine the extent to which the CCACs are meeting their mandate and to also at the same time identify the strengths of the program and also to look at what opportunities there are for improvement.

I think the fact that they've now been established for several years is important. We have some history now of what they're able to do and can perhaps take a look at where there is room for improvement. We're also going to have an opportunity to take into consideration some of the issues that have been raised over the past few years as to concerns that people might have about the system and ways that they think personally the system can respond more effectively in providing service needs.

I'm pleased to say that the review is coming along quite well, I understand. There's an opportunity for the stakeholders to be included: the service provider organizations, the service providers, the primary referral sources and also some of the service clients and their families. It's quite a comprehensive review. I know I personally look forward to getting the review and the recommendations that will ensue in order that we can continue to ensure that community care services are available to all Ontarians in this province.

**Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek):** How much time is left, Chair?

**The Chair:** We have now approximately 8 minutes.

**Mr Clark:** Minister, I think it's fair to state that there have been a number of reports over the past 15 to 20 years from different people, different actuarial experts, recommending some significant changes to the way we

do health care across Canada. I can refer back to a report that was written in the book *Economic Security for an Aging Canadian Population*, by professor Robert Brown from the University of Waterloo. At that time, he made a point of drawing the conclusion about the aging population and the impact that it was going to have on both human resources and operations in terms of health care. He drew attention to the lack of long-term-care beds. The CMA at the time stated that 30,000 beds across Canada should be built. I recognize our government has moved forward and we're in the process of building 20,000 beds.

In that same report it also talked about what was going to happen as the aging population progressed and that the loss of human resources was going to be staggering—that you are going to have a number of professionals retiring, you would have a lower population servicing a retired community and the impacts would be staggering. You've met with your federal, provincial and territorial ministers and counterparts a number of times. Perhaps you can somehow summarize what's happening across Canada, how they're reacting to these pressures and where we're sitting in meeting those pressures.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I am familiar with Dr Brown's report and certainly I can tell you that the issue of an inadequate supply of health service professionals is of serious concern to each and every government from coast to coast in Canada, including the federal government. We do recognize that as the population ages, there is going to be an increased need for services. The costs are going to increase. We simply have to take a look at our own province today, where we're spending approximately \$22 billion in health. Half of that, \$11 billion, is being consumed by 12.6% of our population, those over the age of 65.

However, having said that, at our most recent meeting in Winnipeg, it was acknowledged that this was a most serious issue. In fact, I brought this issue to the FPT table on many occasions, because we've seen that this is one that needs to be addressed. There was a commitment made in Winnipeg that we would work co-operatively together in order to develop strategies that could be used by all governments across this country, but I will tell you in many instances in the province of Ontario we are ahead of what is happening elsewhere. For example, when it comes to the issue of nurses, the task force that we set up several years ago, where we identified the need for additional nurses, whether it's 10,000 or the 12,000 that we said we need—that was a step taken that certainly was ahead of where the other provinces were.

Again, we have the expert panel that is looking at the whole issue of physician resources, led by Dr Peter George. He'll be reporting this fall. We hope that his recommendations will indicate how many additional medical spots are necessary in schools, how we can further expedite the entry of foreign-trained health professionals into Ontario and what supply of physicians is going to be required, not only in the short term but in the long term. So there's a lot of long-term planning taking place.



When it comes to the issue of radiation therapists, as you know, we've increased our capacity from 50 to 75 radiation therapists, and I know many of our colleagues across Canada are now looking at doing something similar. We've already expanded our spots in medical schools by 40 this year, and other provinces in Canada are going to be doing that as well.

As far as the issue of community care access centres and the need for homemakers, that's an issue. Everyone recognizes that additional homemakers are going to be required, and we're looking at developing a strategy here as to how we can make sure that people are encouraged to consider that as a career.

There's collaboration occurring across Canada by all the governments, but at the same time many of the shortages that have been identified we have already identified strategies for, and have committees looking at how we can ensure an adequate supply of health professionals in order to meet the needs of our aging population.

**The Chair:** Further questions? Mr Wettlaufer, you have two minutes.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Madam Minister, the federal government participation under the Canada Health Act 35 years ago was originally set at 50%. Presently, although you can correct me on this, I believe they are contributing about 13% to the health care dollar in Ontario.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, it's 10 cents. It will be 13 cents at the end of the five years, as they restore some of the health transfer payments to the province, and that's a considerable distance from what had originally been anticipated, of 50-50.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** And of course as we spend more on health care, their share is going to go down again.

I heard it said recently that 18% should be the magic figure, if you will, of federal government participation in order for Ontario's health care system to survive as it is now without any improvements. Could you comment on that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Certainly. The money that the federal government has taken out since 1994-95, obviously for that shortfall we've had to put additional money into the health system. We've increased our funding each and every year since 1995 and we now are spending this year, as a result of additional announcements that we're making, in excess of \$22 billion. It really is incumbent upon the federal government, if they want to be a true partner in health, to be contributing. As I say, the ideal that was envisioned at one time was 50-50, but 18% isn't going to take us too far.

They also need to take into consideration inflation, the increasing cost of drugs, this aging population, new medical equipment, new technology, and they need to be building in an escalator. We haven't seen any escalator placed into any agreement and there doesn't seem to be a strong commitment on the part of the federal government to become a full and equal funding partner.

1700

**The Chair:** Your time has now expired. We go to the official opposition. Just a reminder that these sessions are 11 minutes and 40 seconds and commence now.

**Mrs McLeod:** I have it, Mr Chairman, in my head.

I wanted, for one last moment, to return to hospital allocations. Just so we understand, you've indicated that you will table for us, so that we can follow the dollars through, the actual allocations that have been made on the overall hospital budget that are specific to this current year. We know about the \$235 million, so it's this current year's funding that we'd like to see tabled.

Could we also ask that the individual hospital allocations, the total allocations for the year for each hospital, be tabled? Because we don't know how much of what's in Friday's announcement relates back to June and so on. I'm assuming you have total hospital funding allocations for each hospital.

**Mr King:** Yes, we do. We have total allocation and that information, as far as I know, could be available.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you. I—

**Ms DiEmanuele:** Ms McLeod, if I could just ask for a point of clarification. It's on \$153 million, the June announcement, the \$451 million which you are looking for further clarification on, and then a hospital-by-hospital piece on both of those particular announcements?

**Mrs McLeod:** Yes. I'm looking for an explanation of—we have announcements and then we have allocations and then we have spending. So we have things like \$435 million in new permanent funding; we had \$329 million, of which \$168 million was actually allocated in June; we have \$267 million that was rolled over from last year's funding into this year's funding, making one-time permanent; we had \$196 million; we had \$235 million; we had \$471 million on Friday; and we have some yet to be announced.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It's a lot of money.

**Mrs McLeod:** But unfortunately, Minister, it's difficult to know how many times it's being reannounced, and hospitals are telling us exactly the same thing. It's very difficult to figure out what's old and what's new. I just want to work with a clean sheet. I want to know what your overall funding is for hospitals for this year and what the allocations are for hospitals.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** The difficulty is, as Mr King indicated, this year is not yet complete, so we can certainly give you information at a point in time.

**Mrs McLeod:** At this point in time. I appreciate that. I understand there's more funding. I'll assume that if I can get those figures, whatever is about to be announced will be on top of what you table with me, so we'll know what each hospital is actually receiving. I would expect that, because you've indicated that your funding announcements are based on analysis of operating plans, the operating plans and deficits would also be public information.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes, and I would just get back to what you said before. The most recent announcement on Friday, except for some emergency money, was all new funding, despite what some might say, for our hospitals that had not ever been announced before.

**Mrs McLeod:** Right. I appreciate that it hasn't been allocated before, Minister. I don't want to get into a word

game. That's why I'm really asking to see the numbers. That would be very helpful.

As well, I appreciate there's a volume of material here, so I'm not sure that it's legitimate for me to ask that the operating plans and deficits be tabled with any summary material that you can provide in terms of total hospital deficits or individual hospital deficits—and since it is public information and I saw heads nod, just for the record, now that it is public information, I assume that our staff have access to that information so that we can look at it without it having to be tabled.

**Mr King:** I just wanted to mention that the operating plans are also working documents and there are often assumptions that the hospitals assume that aren't necessarily approved. That's how some of the deficit projections are based.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm sorry to interrupt, because I really do want this information, but my colleague has just come in, and if I don't let her get on to some long-term-care issues—so two very quick things.

Can I assume that, once the figures are tabled, if we have questions we can call and ask for those explanations? I really don't want to cut it off.

I appreciate the responses to all of our questions to date. There is one question that still isn't answered. My question about the top-up on emergency room funding was how much hospitals have to contribute out of their global budgets to that.

Before I turn it over to my colleague, it may not be fair to ask you this, but I would be very interested in knowing the non-ministry lab costs that are funded by the Ministry of Health, obviously, but I can't find a line item for them. I'm interested in knowing how much of that is going to Dynacare and MDS and how much of it is going to other labs, so I'll leave that.

My last question is the arthritis strategy and when we can expect to see it released, since I understand it's been done for a year.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** While we're getting the date, just with respect to the questions, as you know, there has been a great deal of information requested and we have tabled some information as of today. We'll verify the questions against Hansard and then get that back to you.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate that, and I'm sorry to rush you.

**Ms DiEmanuele:** And we'll get you a date on the arthritis.

**The Chair:** You have about five and a half minutes, Mrs Pupatello.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** I'd like to ask the minister specifically, regarding the RFP process on long-term-care facilities, what changes were made to the RFP process from the first round in 1998 to the second, in addition to requiring some level of land being acquired by the person who is making the RFP submission. How else did you change the bid? We understand that this is one of the major reasons, in addition to several others, why after five and a half years of your government there is still not one new bed available in long-term care, although there have been several an-

nouncements and several ribbon cuttings. There has been refurbishing of existing beds, but no new bed is on the market. In all of the announcements that have been made to date, it should have been confirmed that it's not a new bed. We do know you went through changing the RFP because you realized you had some major problems with the way you had the RFP process to begin with.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Ms Pupatello, we've already dealt with this question, but I'd be happy to respond again. As you know, we originally had indicated we'd build these new beds over eight years; I'm pleased to say that we've been able to have an expedited process put in place. All 20,000 beds will now be up and operating in six years.

I'm also pleased to say that, contrary to what you said about no new beds having opened, there are a total of 691 beds that have been opened, and these are new beds.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Out of the 20,000 in five and a half years, you have 691?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to allow Ms Paech to address that issue, but I can tell you that after 10 years of no beds, from 1988 to 1998, we are moving forward. Given the fact that some of the municipalities were not moving these requests forward and it was taking 18 months to get through the red tape, the progress is phenomenal.

**Mrs Pupatello:** You're speaking of zoning issues etc, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Exactly. We now have a dedicated unit and we now have Ms Paech, and I'll ask her to respond because she's done a great job in moving this forward.

**Ms Gail Paech:** Gail Paech, assistant deputy minister, long-term-care redevelopment.

As the minister has indicated, of the 20,000 beds that were announced in 1998, 14,500 have been allocated through the RFP process, and we are going to be announcing shortly the last round for allocation of the 5,500, which will bring it up to 20,000 beds that will be out there. Of those 20,000 beds, they are made up of two sets of beds.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Could you please address the question of how the process changed from the first round in 1998 to the round you're now having, not to mention the change in the person submitting the RFP having acquired land?

**Ms Paech:** The process has changed. From working with the stakeholders, they asked that the process become more simplified and also, as you have indicated, that land be a requirement to be considered for an allocation. So you must own land, have an option on land or have a lease on a piece of property.

We have also looked at the development experience. It will be a criterion that we will give more serious consideration to in order to ensure that the organizations have the developmental capacity to build these facilities. We are also emphasizing more their operational experience so that we have organizations that have been involved in operating long-term-care facilities or like facilities such as retirement homes.



Those are some of the major changes that we have made in this new process.

1710

**Mrs Papatello:** I'd like to ask a question of the minister, that she forward some information to me from the various departments that might be related. It involves the nurse-to-patient ratios in the various facilities that the ministry funds. This is a question that comes out of a great deal of searching for information. What the bed is called depends on the kind of care that surrounds the patient in that bed.

Specifically, could I ask the minister to provide us with a list of the difference in service if it's a critical care bed, a chronic care bed, a nursing home bed, a home-for-the-aged bed, a complex continuing care bed or a long-term-care bed. I think out of those six there may be another level of bed that I haven't mentioned, but obviously my question is an important one. The supply per diem you give to that bed depends on what the bed is called. It's becoming quite an issue in how those facilities are being funded by the ministry.

Could the minister provide me with a definition of those different levels of bed, the amount of per diem per that definition, and if there has been a change in those definitions or the per diem over the course of the last five and a half years?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We'll certainly endeavour to respond to that question, Ms Papatello.

**Mrs Papatello:** Do we have more time, Chair?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. You're just about out of time. There's time for a very brief response.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think she's asked for information, and I've indicated that we'll endeavour to provide that.

**The Chair:** Then I think it is basically over to the third party for 11 minutes and 40 seconds.

**Ms Lankin:** What can I say? So many questions and so little time. My thanks to all the ministry staff who have been providing answers and have worked to support the minister in this, and apologies for any rudeness as we move quickly through questions.

I'd like to turn for this last segment to health promotion, specifically looking at the budget items on pages 91 and 92. You may require some staff from the health promotion area and also particularly from the Ontario tobacco strategy as I get into my questions, so if they are around and could come up, that would free things up a little bit.

On page 92, where you have the explanations for expenditure change, there are a couple of items listed under "Reallocations within Ministry." There's \$3.7 million having been reallocated from the public health vote item to the health promotion vote item. Could someone tell me what that \$3.7-million reallocation is?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** The \$3.7-million allocation is from Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, from the public health area.

**Ms Lankin:** Is that the entire expenditure for that program?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** No. I think you were asking about the reallocation.

**Dr D'Cunha:** For information technology and evaluation of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program.

**Ms Lankin:** Because there are other items in this book that show reallocations of the Healthy Babies program and it doesn't come here.

The community health services, the \$300,000 reallocation?

**Ms Kardos Burton:** That was the three staff in problem gambling.

**Ms Lankin:** So those items have been moved. You believe they're better defined as health promotion at this point in time; that's why you moved them? OK.

The funding increases: the Ontario stroke strategy direction is a really important initiative. Is the \$3-million one-time funding or is that ongoing base funding in the health promotions budget?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Colin Andersen will respond.

**Mr Colin Andersen:** Colin Andersen, ADM of health policy.

There is actually funding in several areas for the stroke strategy, in several parts of the estimates.

**Ms Lankin:** Yes. I saw \$100,000 in community long-term-care services etc, but what's here in this budget?

**Mr Andersen:** There is a substantial amount of ongoing funding. It's going to be \$30 million altogether for the stroke strategy, and it is ongoing funding.

**Ms Lankin:** In this particular budget, this \$3 million, is this ongoing?

**Mr Andersen:** This particular item, you mean? I'll just have to check on that one.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, at first glance at this vote item you record a \$17-million increase, a 97% increase in health promotion. I believe, quite frankly, that we do far too little on this side of the ledger within health. That sounds kind of impressive until you look behind the numbers: \$4 million of that is a reallocation from other ministry lines, so it's not an increased expenditure. The \$3 million in the stroke strategies direction we'll find out about, but I think that is a valuable addition as a government initiative.

The renewed Ontario tobacco strategy in some ways, while I credit you for starting again a process of committing to this, is way behind the mark in terms of where we should be.

The reason I say that if you look behind the numbers it's rather disappointing is that from 1995 to 1999 there was actually an \$11.5-million decrease in the health promotion budget line. This year we see a bump made up of a reannouncement or a reinvestment in the tobacco strategy, which you cut in the first place and are now reinvesting in, and some reallocations—\$4 million, at least, reallocations from other budget lines that existed and were ongoing commitments of the government.

Specifically with respect, first of all, to the tobacco strategy, the recommendation of your own expert panel and the US Centres for Disease Control is that we need to be spending about \$8 per capita on this kind of initiative.



While you are now going to double the amount of money that we're spending, it's going to be \$1.50 per capita that you'll be spending, far short of that \$8 per capita.

I do understand the complexities of the tobacco tax issue and the balance that has to be played between control of illegal smuggling and tobacco tax levels and yet discouraging young people from smoking by having a high enough level. It is pointed out by advocates in this area that Ontario in fact is below the national average. We're paying \$31.68 for a carton in Ontario—I say “we” because I'm one of them—compared to \$41 to \$50 in the western provinces. I'll point out to the minister that I actually quit when I was Minister of Health. Guilt is a wonderful thing.

We actually have room in which we could raise tobacco taxes without getting back into that spiral of the problems of smuggling. There could be over \$200 million raised by that, and if that was in a dedicated fund toward a tobacco strategy, we could do so much. So let me say thank you for what you are doing, but it falls way short of the mark. It can't be applauded, given the cuts you made in the first place. There is a strategy that's been suggested that would allow us to aggressively go after this, and what a difference that could make in the long term in terms of costs in our health care system.

What can I do to help you convince the Minister of Finance that we've got a strategy here that's a winner for the people and for the health budget in the long run? We could work together on this, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I guess my question to you, Ms Lankin, is, if we increased the price, if the federal government decided to do that, is that going to discourage you from smoking?

**Ms Lankin:** Honestly, it just might.

**Mrs McLeod:** That's a low blow.

**Ms Lankin:** No, it's not a low blow, because I admit to this fully. The ministry staff will remember that on my schedule I had an event a week down the road to receive on the front steps the world's longest petition for a smoke-free world from grades 7 and 8, and I took the pack of cigarettes, threw it in the garbage, and stayed off it until the Premier moved me into economic development. So there are competing pressures. But I'm saying, even as one of those people who desperately need help, who suffer from the addiction, there's a strategy that can work, Minister. What can I do to help you? Where can we go with this? On a serious note, it needs a dramatic increase in investment. What we're doing doesn't measure up to what the experts tell us needs to be done.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** First of all, I'm very committed personally, and I know the ministry staff and the government are as well, to reducing tobacco use in the province. I'm particularly concerned about the number of women and young people who are smoking. What we've endeavoured to do is to listen to the stakeholders. We have moved forward with a renewed Ontario tobacco strategy. We will continue to move forward with other initiatives. We have the new revised Lungers are for Life program and we have all of the initiatives that you know

about school-based prevention programs. I don't know if Mary Kardos Burton wants to make any further comments.

1720

**Ms Lankin:** I guess my specific plea is that you consider from your ministry making the pitch—given that we are below the national cost, we've got some room. I understand the smuggling argument; I do. I lived through it. But we've got some room, and if we could dedicate those funds from an increased tobacco tax to your renewed strategy, I'll stop complaining about you having ditched an old strategy and not done anything for a couple of years and join you in moving forward.

That brings me to the last point that I want to raise, Minister. There was a time in the province, and it was embraced across the country, when ministries of health in particular, but governments more importantly, I think, in general, were moving toward adopting a framework of determinants of health. Here in this province, from the Premier's Council from the days of the Peterson government, that was taken, embraced by the Rae government, brought into the day-to-day operations of all the ministries. Everything that came forward was assessed from the determinants of health. It falls outside of your ministry.

It's what we're going to invest in affordable housing, it's what we're going to invest in clean drinking water, it's what we're going to invest in doing away with the income differentials and the poverty that exists, all of those things which really have the key impact on building a healthy population. I believe that many decisions that have been taken, particularly in the early days by your government, are devastating in terms of population health in the long term.

I believe, now that we have a budget surplus, that we are in a robust economic time, that government must recommit itself to a determinants of health strategy for the whole government that lies outside of the Ministry of Health. I'm asking you today, what work have you done and/or what are you prepared to do to take that message to your Premier and cabinet and adopt a determinants-of-health framework for the operations of government?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think the government certainly has been moving forward, and one of the key initiatives we have undertaken is to ensure that there is economic growth within the province of Ontario in order that we can ensure that everyone has an enhanced quality of life. But I accept the information that has been provided and I can assure you we are committed to making sure that everybody enjoys a high standard.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Minister, I asked an earlier question, before you ran out of time, in relation to long-term-care beds and if I can just expand on that question. I understand that last spring you made another announcement about an investment in Ontario's long-term-care sector. That announcement revolved around a historic change in how government accounts for preferred accommodation revenues by long-term-care facilities. Could you take the

time, or certainly one of your staff members from the ministry, to explain that to us?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK, and I guess in response to your other question as well, Mr Mazzilli, you talked about the beds. I mentioned the 20,000 beds that we were going to ensure were available to people by 2004, but I think it's also important to talk about the fact that in consultation with our stakeholders, we took a look at the beds and the accommodation available and we came up with new design standards in order to ensure that people in this province would have the highest quality of life possible.

As a result, we now have new design standards that mean that there are one or two people sharing a room; there's access to a washroom so you don't have huge wards. We have little home units within buildings that accommodate 30, 32 people; they have their own dining room, their own living room. So in every way possible these new design standards have really enhanced the quality of life for people in this province. You only have to visit a new facility.

In doing that, we discovered there were quite a few beds in the province that were not meeting the design standards, so we actually have more construction on-going and we have at least 16,500 other beds being totally renovated and brought up to our new design standards. So following on, we also have made some changes to accommodation and, retroactive to April 1, 2000, our government is now allowing the long-term-care facility operators to retain 100% of their preferred accommodation revenues. This is going to mean almost \$47 million in new funding to ensure continuing quality care to Ontario's 57,000 residents. It's going to allow the facilities to provide a number of improved accommodation services for residents, including improved dietary, laundry, housekeeping and other general maintenance services. Of course, it will also help to expedite the government's aggressive commitment to the 20,000 new beds.

We have listened very carefully to our long-term care stakeholders and we've worked with the long-term care associations to ensure that we can meet the needs of the seniors in this province.

**Mr Stewart:** Minister, last Friday, as we'd mentioned before, we had this wonderful announcement regarding additional operational funding for the hospitals, and I guess because of the federal election campaign on at the moment there have been a couple of comments made to me in my riding. I think the words were, "Thank God for the federal agreement." I took a great deal of offence to that because it's my understanding the federal agreement does not kick in for some time. I would like to ask you to expand on that comment, and I won't tell you what I said to them.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I won't ask what you said, but I think it is very, very important for the public in the province of Ontario to recognize that we have received not one penny in additional funding from the federal government. It's one issue that certainly surprised all of my colleagues in Canada when the agreement was reached with the—

**Mrs Papatello:** Point of order, Mr Chairman: I guess I'll have to put on record then that the \$750 million that was in the budget and not spent by this same government is, and can be, spent in this fiscal year.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** Sorry, it's not a point of order.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Actually, Mr Stewart, in response to your question, the money that the federal government is going to be giving back to the provinces and territories in the form of transfer payments will not be flowing to the provinces until after April 1, 2001. Even at that time, as you know, we aren't going to see a complete restoration of the funding that has been withdrawn by the federal government, and we don't have any escalator and it doesn't take into consideration the increasing costs of providing health care throughout Canada. So for anyone to think that this was federal money, it was not. We haven't seen it.

How much time do we have, Mr Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** You have about five more minutes. Mr Wettlaufer, you seem to be anxious to ask your question.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, as you are aware, we've come under a fair amount of fire for the physician shortage, certainly in my area and in your area of Waterloo region. Recently, I received a letter from a constituent complaining that she had to wait for seven months for a specialist appointment. It's my recollection that there was a doctor freeze in terms of graduations in the medical schools back, I'm going to say, around 1990, because I don't remember the exact year, that has contributed considerably to the shortage of physicians in this province and also the shortage of specialists.

We were anticipating that with the change in needs of the populace of the province there was also going to be a change in vision in the ministry, ie, using more nurse practitioners to take on some of the duties previously performed by physicians. I was just wondering what progress we're making on that, if any, and how long do we figure it will take before we do see some of that?

1730

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We do believe that there is an opportunity for nurse practitioners to provide improved access to primary care throughout the province of Ontario. As you know, we brought in the regulation that allowed the nurse practitioners to practise. We were the first province in Canada to do so. I am pleased to say that as a result of our funding announcements, I think we have more than 200—

**Mr Zegarac:** If I could just comment?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK.

**Mr Zegarac:** Out of the nursing announcements—

**The Chair:** Please identify yourself.

**Mr Zegarac:** I'm George Zegarac. I'm the executive director for the integrated policy and planning division. We announced 106 nurse practitioners out of the Nursing Task Force response. That funding is flowing. Over half have been filled to date, with the remainder hopefully to be filled before the end of the year.



**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We're actually looking at making future announcements for additional nurse practitioners to be available to provide primary care services to people in this province.

I will tell you that they've been very well received. We have them in the primary care networks. We have them in some of the northern communities. We have them in the long-term-care facilities. They certainly have been well accepted by the public. As I said, we hope to make further announcements increasing funding for nurse practitioners.

**The Vice-Chair:** That seems to wrap up the estimates for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We'll then proceed to the respective votes.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Curling, I wonder if I could just add: the 200 nurse practitioners I referred to—there are now 226 nurse practitioners providing health services in the province.

In conclusion, I would just like to express my sincere appreciation to the people here from all three parties, but in particular to my deputy and all of the staff at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I do want to express my sincere appreciation to them. There is a considerable amount of work involved in preparing all of this information and I certainly owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

**The Vice-Chair:** I too, as the Chair, would like to express that view. But let us move on the votes. We have about seven votes here.

Shall votes 1401 to 1407 carry? Carried.

**Mr Peters:** No.

**The Vice-Chair:** My ears say that I heard yea more than nay.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Health carry? Carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Health to the House? I think I heard more yea than nay.

That would conclude the estimates for the Ministry of Health. I just want to thank the staff and all those who are here, and also the critics of the other parties who have conducted themselves exceptionally well. It made my job much easier.

I'm going to have a five-minute recess for the next ministry, the Ministry of Community and Social Services to come in.

*The committee recessed from 1734 to 1739.*

#### MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**The Vice-Chair:** May we commence the estimates hearing for the Ministry of Community and Social Services? Mr Mazzilli, I ask you to take your seat.

Welcome, Minister, and your new deputy. You may proceed. You have 30 minutes. We can only do about 20 minutes today, so we will adjourn at 6 o'clock.

**L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones):** Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vois

mon cher collègue le député de Timmins-Baie James, le porte-parole pour le Nouveau Parti démocratique, qui est francophone. S'il était possible, je pourrais faire toutes mes remarques en français.

**M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James):** C'est excellent.

**Hon Mr Baird:** C'est mon grand plaisir d'être ici aujourd'hui pour parler de choses très importantes dans le ministère des Services sociaux et communautaires. It's a privilege for me to be here to discuss the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Today I am joined by our deputy minister, John Fleming, who recently joined the ministry after a tour at corrections and environment. So it will be a good addition to the ministry.

I am pleased to have the opportunity over the next 20 minutes to outline some of the areas where the ministry works and is very active in communities right across the province. Perhaps one of the biggest lessons I learned when I became the Minister of Community and Social Services is that the ministry is involved and active in the provision of services to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, whether they be children with special needs, adults with disabilities or people on social assistance experiencing financial difficulties.

We're active in virtually every community across the province of Ontario in a whole host of ways. Today I would like to begin to give an overview of those initiatives and services that the ministry provides through our regional and area offices right across the province each and every day.

One of the areas where we're most involved is in children's services. I said I wouldn't do this, but I will. I was very impressed when I arrived at the ministry 18 months ago. I am one who has often been a critic of government, that we somehow are broken up into silos, that sometimes the left arm doesn't know what the right arm is doing. But the Ministry of Community and Social Services is a real leader, with the Ministry of Health, in beginning to work together and break down those silos. That is perhaps no more evident than in our assistant deputy minister, Cynthia Lees, who not only gets to sit through the next seven and a half hours of this committee, but sat through the last seven and a half hours as a Ministry of Health assistant deputy minister. Children's services and children's programming is one of the central businesses of the ministry where we spend a terrific amount of resources and effort, led by Cynthia Lees within our ministry, who jointly reports to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Children's programming and children's public policy and efforts to improve the lives of children with special needs, and indeed all children, is a real priority for the government. It is of particular importance and a personal priority for our Premier.

One of the areas where we work very hard is helping provide services for children with special needs. In last year's budget, in the budget of May 1999, we announced



an increase of \$17 million to respite programs for multiple special needs children. Seven million dollars of that respite care was devoted to at-home respite services for medically fragile and technologically dependent children, and a further \$10 million was provided to our regions across the province to increase out-of-home respite care for multiple special needs children with either a physical and/or a developmental disability.

One of the lessons I learned early on at the ministry that certainly reinforced my experience as a member of the Legislature, particularly with children with special needs, is that you have children with a physical disability, which is a tremendous challenge for them and for their families, but you also have children with a developmental disability, which requires a whole range of different supports, in addition to those with both a physical and a developmental disability. Too often, these children are forgotten. This is one of these respite programs which is designed to help increase those supports to those children with a dual or a multiple diagnosis. This is making a huge difference in the lives of families.

I think we often look at the children themselves and forget that it's not just their needs that we must be cognizant of, but about the needs of their family, of their parents, and how they can be in a position to provide supports for those children in the context of being a working family. That respite support is really important and really critical, to support families. Most families have a real challenge in meeting the demands of work and meeting the demands of a child with a special need. Respite supports can be really crucial to their ability to balance those needs. For a relatively modest sum of money for an individual family, it can make a huge difference in their lives and their ability to provide care for maybe the other 50 or 51 weeks a year, which is something that's incredibly important.

Another big area within the ministry where we work extremely hard is in the provision of services for children's mental health. Children's mental health is within the Ministry of Community and Social Services as opposed to the Ministry of Health, and it's an area where we spend approximately \$296 million a year, which represents a 34% increase, so it's something we see as a priority. This year funding increased by a further \$10 million, which represented a \$20-million increase announced in the budget of May 1999 to our nine regions across the province, to help meet the needs of children, whether they be behavioural, emotional or other mental health needs.

That's when we had the opportunity to visit a number of children's mental health centres around the province and meet with some of the people who work every day in this sector. It's a labour of love and a challenge for these individuals. I had the chance to visit Lynwood Hall in Hamilton and talk to some of the board members there and some of the staff who work and make that facility run on a daily basis, and to meet some of the children who get those services and that support. Any preconceptions I might have had earlier on in my tenure as

to the needs of these children are really challenged when I have the opportunity to meet them. They could be any one of us at a younger age or they could be any one of the children we live next door to or have in our own communities, but through a number of forces coming concurrently, they have a challenge and require support.

I've also had the opportunity to visit Windsor and talk to a number of the children's service providers there, whether they be at the Maryvale children's centre or at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. There can be a whole range of supports these young children need, whether it be a bed in the hospital for a child who might have been in danger of hurting themselves or whether it be some pretty substantial behavioural issues that a child has grappled with. Again, the whole family has to grapple with that, so it can be anything from a hospital bed to outplacement services to something more permanent. The children can even get educational supports right in one of those centres, as they do at Maryvale in Windsor, where they do a tremendous job.

I try to take the opportunity, whenever it presents itself, to talk to the service providers and, most importantly, to talk to some of these children and adolescents and find out about their needs and what their hopes and aspirations are, to get a better sense of what challenges they face each and every day in their lives. There's a terrific network around the province of children's mental health centres that support these children at risk and indeed their families.

We are implementing at the ministry a four-point plan for children's mental health services, to help enhance the services and indeed to increase their access. The plan includes new funding for intensive child and family services, a mobile crisis response, telepsychiatry and standard assessment instruments for intake and assessment outcomes supported by a centralized database. I was particularly pleased to learn, when I travelled to Sudbury about a month and a half or two months ago, of the benefits telepsychiatry has offered to rural and northern Ontario, which might not have the benefit of some of the supports that are available in the larger centres where that centre of expertise can be available.

I talked to individuals who will work through the telepsychiatry initiatives with some of the experts in the province and the country, and indeed some of them are world-renowned experts at the Hospital for Sick Children. They have the opportunity to interact with them on a regular basis to help support those children in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario, to help ensure that they have the same access to supports to help them meet their challenges. That's something that's incredibly important, that we always be cognizant and mindful of the needs of children in various parts of the province. A child in downtown Toronto has tremendous physical access to supports, and we must be mindful of the needs of the children in outlying areas, in rural Ontario and throughout northern Ontario, whether it be in the northwest or the northeast. How we can use new technologies and new communications technologies to help address those

needs—the early signals have been a very positive experience and have been very successful. I was pleased to hear that commentary from a number of the service providers when Children's Mental Health Ontario met in Sudbury in September.

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We're also undertaking an initiative with respect to autism and providing services for autistic children. Funding will be going to \$19.3 million to provide intensive early intervention services for children with autism who are under the age of six years. This is a result of the budget announcement in May 1999. At the time, I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and had the opportunity to hear a presentation by Trevor Williams and the Autism Society of Ontario. Different from many social service providers, they came forward with somewhat of a business case. They were able to point out the benefits and the return on government investment in those early years by supporting a child under the age of six. They were able to talk about much the same things as Dr Fraser Mustard has talked about in terms of the malleability of a young child's brain, intervening at an early age with services for autistic children and the incredible benefits it can have that just aren't attainable with the same input at a later stage in their life.

When they made that presentation back in February or March 1999, in the last Parliament, I was incredibly struck, and the Minister of Finance wholeheartedly accepted the need for the government to do more in this area. I was surprised that no government to that point had undertaken a major initiative in this regard and I was very pleased to see that, as part of the budget announcement, we can move forward and begin to provide these services. We'll be a leader in Canada, which is something we in Ontario can be incredibly proud of. This will make a huge difference in the lives of a lot of young children.

One of the challenges we've encountered in this area has been that there is not a network of supports out there that we can easily tap into. We have a huge mountain to climb in terms of the training to provide therapy to these young children. We are certainly working very diligently with a network of service providers around the province, and with parents, in terms of beginning to plug children into that program. We're incredibly proud of that. It's a real priority. While it has taken longer than any one of us would have liked, I think the end product will be well worth the wait. It's very exciting.

Another initiative we provide for vulnerable children is the breakfast program. This is an initiative that we first talked about as a party back in 1994 and then in 1995 as a government, again going back to Dr Fraser Mustard and some of the research he's done in terms of a child being able to show up for school, particularly at an early age, and be ready to learn. Some \$2.5 million was provided to the Canadian Living Foundation to provide supports for their Breakfast for Learning program. That has been an incredible success. We provide supports to that organization. With their network of volunteers, they are able to help about 135,000 children with a nutritious meal every

school day across the province. There is an example with a huge return on the government dollar. We are able to access volunteers, community organizations and the private sector right across the province, which is really exciting. We're able to get an incredible bang for our buck with taxpayers by working with stakeholders and partners, be they in the volunteer sector or the private sector, right across Ontario. That's been an unqualified success. This past budget, we increased support by \$2 million, to bring the total government support for the initiative to \$4.5 million a year, and that's had some very good success.

We've also followed through with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. More than 150 newborns and their mothers each year will benefit from our \$67-million annual investment in follow-up support under the initiative. This includes a universal screening initiative, assessment and a home visit to all new mothers and their babies. This again follows through with trying to ensure that we leave no child behind, and it has been a very good success.

The Better Beginnings, Better Futures program receives about \$5 million in support. It provides prevention services to more than 5,000 high-risk families. I had an opportunity to visit one of these programs in the Alta Vista/Ottawa South area of Ottawa, my hometown, and to see the huge advantage that it's having with young children, particularly in a community with a high immigrant population; to build the work hands-on with young mothers and their families, providing parenting supports to these women, their families and their children. That has indeed met with good support.

Another big priority is child care. Child care spending, supporting parents in their child care decisions, has increased to in excess of \$700 million a year, which is a substantial increase over the past five years. One of the areas where we tried to focus new support is child care for sole-support parents who are clients of Ontario Works, our welfare-to-work program. We try to provide parents, many of whom don't even have mandatory obligations under the program, with access to basic education: going back to high school; English as a second language if they're a new Canadian; and employment support, whether it's a job search course or a community placement or employment placement.

This speaks volumes to the amount of interest and support there is out there, where people without mandatory requirements are very keen and enthusiastic about being able to take advantage of the programs that are offered to them under Ontario Works, to make that important transition from welfare to work.

We're also providing \$25 million of annual support to the LEAP initiative, the Learning, Earning and Parenting program, which began to roll out last year and was further expanded this year across Ontario. That's a substantial investment, one that won't save the government a lot of money but will hopefully save the lives of a lot of primarily young women. That's a program we provide as part of welfare: parenting courses to young single parents



and young two-parent families. In exchange for their welfare cheque, they are required to take those parenting courses and they're required to enrol in school and be in high school to complete their education, when they're 16- and 17-year-olds. The program is mandatory for 16- and 17-year-olds and it's been an outstanding success.

I had the opportunity to visit a number of sites in Brantford and Sudbury. When I visited the site in Brantford, I talked to a number of participants and I was amazed at the claims they made. One of the participants very graphically told me the story about how she didn't want to participate in the program. She was at home, receiving welfare, and she got the call that she had to participate in this program. She was cross, she was angry, she was not pleased. Having been in the program for a number of months, she looked me right in the eye and said, "I'm glad I'm here and I'm glad it's mandatory." That's been a very positive experience for her, to help get her life back on track, to make a better life not just for herself but, as she pointed out to me, a better life for her young daughter. So that's been a good success.

I had another opportunity in Sudbury to sit down for about an hour with eight participants in the LEAP program, just privately over lunch, to talk to them about their experiences with the program and the supports that are available to them. Indeed, the reviews were exceptionally positive. There's always room for improvement, but for such a new program it's had some really outstanding results.

We also support child care through fee subsidies; wage subsidies; resource centres across the province; Ontario Works child care, as I mentioned; earnings exemptions under the STEP program under Ontario Works; and the Ontario child care supplement for working families, in addition to the workplace child care tax incentives. So that demonstrates a substantial investment toward supporting child care.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Minister. We're just about 20 minutes into your 30 minutes. We will resume our hearing on estimates tomorrow, immediately after routine proceedings. We stand adjourned until then.

*The committee adjourned at 1758.*











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**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 November 2000

**Journal  
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Mercredi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Community  
and Social Services

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Services sociaux  
et communautaires



Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 1 November 2000

Mercredi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2000*The committee met at 1600 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** We will reconvene this meeting of the estimates committee. We have representatives from each of the parties.

I understand we are continuing with the opening statement by the minister and I believe the minister has 10 minutes remaining. Minister?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Encore, c'est un grand plaisir pour moi d'être ici et je vais faire toutes mes remarques en français si les membres veulent, ou je peux les faire en anglais aussi.

I'm pleased to continue the discussions outlining the programs and services offered by the ministry. There are a terrific number of initiatives and programs that the ministry concerns itself with.

I think when we left off, I had just concluded discussions on child care and the activities and initiatives the ministry undertakes in that area.

Child welfare, child protection and the services offered by our children's aid societies are another important priority within the ministry. We've seen funding to our children's aid societies grow by almost 100% in the last five years, which demonstrates the substantial commitment that this government has put to child welfare and child protection. These initiatives have been, by and large, non-partisan in nature and had widespread support.

We're taking a step-by-step approach to improve our child protection system in the province of Ontario. We've undertaken a number of initiatives to better enable the child protection system to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Some of these initiatives include a mandatory risk assessment model, new standards for all child protection cases, a new interactive database, additional training for our child protection staff, and a new funding framework to recognize volume has also been part of it. This is something that is perhaps one of our most important responsibilities in the ministry.

Early Years is also an initiative that comes under the ministry, although it's administered by my cabinet colleague the Honourable Margaret Marland, the minister responsible for children, and the secretariat with which

she works. The commission on the Early Years Study and the creation of an Early Years program across Canada has been another important initiative of the ministry.

We have five Early Years demonstration projects in various parts of the province, including one that's bilingual in the city of Vanier, in the Ottawa-Carleton region; one, as well, in rural Ontario in Grey county. It's incredibly important that we be sensitive to the needs not just of urban Ontario but of different elements such as francophones and rural Ontario, and that's what some of these demonstration projects are undertaking.

There's also a \$30-million Early Years challenge fund that will be launched later this fall. We have an Early Years task group and \$6 million in funding over two years to recruit and hire Early Years community co-ordinators. There's a substantial amount of interest and priority that we've accorded there, and that's a personal interest of our Premier.

One of the other initiatives I wanted to raise is another important sector that the ministry deals with—and that's one about which I have had discussions with some of the members around the committee table in the past—the developmental services sector, providing supports to people across the province with a developmental disability.

This is actually the second-biggest area within the ministry after social assistance. Funding this year will have increased to about \$965 million in total, outside of ODSP, which is a record for Ontario and it's an area where we've made substantial progress.

One of the important initiatives in that spectrum of services is the special services at home program. This is an incredibly popular program around the province.

I can recall visiting one family in St Catharines, a board member of the St Catharines Association for Community Living, who painted what the program meant to her. She discussed how her daughter was able to get support from a worker whom they hired to provide support, almost as important to her young daughter as it was to her, and her ability to get out and function in her community; almost a support for daughter and a respite for their family. She went on and talked about the incredible difference that the special services at home program was having in her family's life and how her daughter and indeed the entire family had benefited from the program.

I said, "How much support are you getting?" I was a new minister at the time and uncertain as to the level of support. She said, "About \$3,500." You could see what a

huge difference \$3,500 had to this family in St Catharines at the St Catharines Association for Community Living, which is one of our excellent transfer partner agencies. That really brought home the importance of this program. It's a program that has increased regularly and has never been reduced and it is one of the most popular programs in the ministry.

Another important priority has been providing residential supports to people with developmental disabilities. This can be incredibly important for a number of folks. A lot of families who lead the way in the development of community living initiatives and community living supports in their communities are senior parents who are aging. They are parents who may be 70, even a few who are over 80 years old, who have provided care for their loved ones in their communities for going on 40 or 50 years. There are even a few with a greater amount of service than that.

They are coming to a point in their lives where they either are concerned about their ability to continue to provide supports for their loved ones or are concerned that when they need supports, they won't be there. That's an incredibly important priority within the developmental services sector, both for me personally and for the ministry. We increased funding by about \$18 million to \$24 million in this area of supports, hoping to provide at least 300 more community living opportunities for people in communities across the province. Obviously, senior aging parents is one of the challenges that we have to address.

There is a need for service and care for these families, but also every bit as important is for people to have some confidence that those supports will be there for them in the future. There is what I call almost a fear factor in that families, for many years, worry about what will happen to them when they're no longer able to provide supports. That's one of the priorities to which we're turning our attention through consultations and discussions.

A new initiative that the ministry undertook this year was a real personal priority of mine. It's an initiative called Foundations, where we're providing \$6 million in new funding to set up a new program to provide supports to young people when they leave the school system. We do a tremendous amount in special education, spending more than \$1.3 billion to help young people with special needs reach their full potential. But at the age of 21, they leave the school system and often there are additional supports there. There has to be a range of supports: for some people with a developmental disability, competitive employment is an option, is a potential, and others need day programming or supported employment.

I had the opportunity to visit with a young man in Sudbury recently who is actually one of four or five individuals with a developmental disability who started up their own small business and, with support from the Sudbury and District Association for Community Living, have been successful, with a number of other individuals, in starting up their own small business, with some supports.

For others, day programming is incredibly important—that they have something with which to live their life with dignity and something with which to continue their development. Again, this is another example of where it's not just important to the individual clients who would be served by such a program but indeed their families who need that almost 40-hours-a-week respite support in terms of the day programming it will provide. We're hoping that these initiatives, when rolled out, will add to the spectrum of services and supports that are available to young people with a developmental disability in our community.

This builds on the need to have more transition planning within our school system. Starting at age even 14 or 15, families and our government and the school system have to begin to make plans for individuals about what options and what opportunities are available for them in the future in terms of either furthering their education, their skills development or moving into the community. That initiative is something that we hope to expand across the province in the coming months.

That gives a small outline. I can go on perhaps in the remainder of the 30 minutes of the next go-round to give further examples of what we're doing to support people with developmental disabilities in our communities. These would include employment supports, fire code, labour issues, respite care and the community living initiative that expired in May in terms of the three remaining institutions in Ontario. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We now turn to the official opposition.

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** If I may, with permission from the minister, I'd like to make some opening remarks and then use the bulk of my time for questions.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We always welcome all your questions.

**Mr Gravelle:** So that's acceptable. Mr Chair and members of the committee, I'm pleased to be here today to lead off our party's discussion on the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

As the relatively new Liberal critic for this important portfolio—I've just had this role for about a month—I will admit to feeling the enormity of the job we are beginning here today. There is little doubt that the operations of this ministry do beg closer scrutiny by the members of this committee. For my part, I intend to work hard through this process by raising the issues that I believe demand greater attention, clarification and perhaps some debate.

I want to thank the minister for allowing me to make some opening remarks and then move into questions so that I can now offer some general comments, if I may, about the ministry and its estimates.

As a member of this Legislature since 1995, I have been an unwilling witness to the calculated and sweeping overhaul that has come to Ontario's social services network under the Mike Harris government. I have watched with increasing anger and frustration as this government has heaped hurtful and punitive measures on top of other



hurtful and punitive measures. The consistent approach shown by this government in maintaining its attacks on Ontario's poorest citizens has been nothing short of astonishing.

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What has been proven time and again is that this is a government guided essentially by hot buttons and by calculated moves. I think this could not be more evident anywhere else than in the operations and policies of this Ministry of Community and Social Services.

In terms of political propaganda, almost nothing matches this government's glossy and slick Making Welfare Work piece, a self-serving, hot-button, \$800,000 public relations piece produced and distributed at taxpayers' expense recently.

I did listen very closely to the minister's opening statement, certainly looking for a deviation from what has become standard government fare on social service issues. While it is clear that the minister is comfortable talking about certain aspects of his ministry's operation, I had hoped to hear more compassion, respect and fairness for all members of society and those that have been impacted by the changes that have been made to the welfare system and the social services system in our province. I had certainly hoped to hear new commitments for combatting poverty or homelessness or even some acknowledgement that much more could and should be done to help Ontario's poorest children.

I had hoped also, rather faint-heartedly perhaps, for some commitment by this minister to put the "fair" back in welfare, because I believe that no such good fortune awaits the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have fallen into Ontario's social safety net only to discover that it does have a big hole in it. Instead of help, these Ontarians get treated to indecipherable catch phrases like "business transformation project," "common purpose procurement" and "consolidated municipal service managers," terms courtesy of the government's very own boondoggle contract with Andersen Consulting, which is costing us certainly up to \$180 million.

I say to you, Minister, that when considering that you're dealing with Ontario's neediest citizens, I find it offensive that words such as "clients" and "business-oriented" and "benefits and returns" are among the favourite descriptions used by the ministry.

This is a ministry that is about community—that is, providing services to help those most vulnerable—and I think business is essentially about profit and return, the antithesis to what providing aid is truly about. Your terms may ease your conscience when it comes to the denial about the impact of your policies, but it is disrespectful to those people who turn to their government for help and find a CEO instead of a caring minister who is willing to intervene and help in their time of need.

Instead of help, we have a government led by Mr Harris, who professes that no Ontario child should fall through the cracks, yet who chastises those who suggest that so-called rebate cheques should be directed to agencies that help Ontario's poorest families. We have a

Premier who says that many Ontarians needed their rebate cheques to buy clothes and food for their kids, yet who, by the very design of this vote-getting program, has shut out the poorest 1.2 million Ontarians by not making this rebate accessible to them.

I say to the government and to the minister and the Premier that we do need a new partnership in this province, and I believe it starts by leading by example. If I may, I want to look at the example set by this government so far just in the area of social assistance supports.

This government has denied cost-of-living increases to persons on Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support program, despite the absolute clear fact that shelter costs have gone through the roof and despite the fact that the Ministry of Health's public health division has collected data showing unmistakable increases in the cost of food in communities across Ontario over the past five years;

This government has clawed back the national child benefit from social assistance recipients, despite the fact that it is not treated as income for other families;

This government has perpetrated the myth of rampant welfare fraud by imposing harsh, constitutionally questionable provisions, including liens on properties, lifetime bans for those convicted and restrictions on educational savings funds—yet this is a government that cancelled a tax fraud squad even though it found far more rampant and serious examples of tax fraud than anything dreamed up by this government in the area of welfare fraud;

This government speaks about the accountability in the social assistance system, yet refuses to make itself accountable for the irrefutable proof offered by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, community social planning councils, the Ontario Social Safety Network, and many others, that its policies are negatively impacting Ontario's poorest families.

These are but a few of the examples where this government's callous disregard and utter lack of respect for families in need show through and through. I expect through the duration of this estimates review we may be uncovering some more.

To this government I believe it is all about hot buttons and calculated moves. The Premier talks about doing his part for Ontario's children, yet it is his government's policies that have stigmatized and demonized the more than one quarter million children living on social assistance.

The question I ask is, where is the leadership in combating children's poverty? Where is the commitment to eradicate homelessness? Why is program efficiency not linked in your government's eyes to program effectiveness? Why have you tied Andersen Consulting's profit margin to their ability to kick people off Ontario's social assistance programs?

It is pretty clear where this government has drawn the line, and who benefits and who loses when it comes to social policies in this province. It is certainly not the



195,000 clients of the Ontario disability support program who have lost the continuity of staff working on their files under the guise of, I think, a nonsensical and unworkable team approach to case management. I'll look forward to talking about that at a later point. This reminds me very much of the Family Responsibility Office and some of the problems that have happened as a result of that kind of approach. Under this government, many of these same people have been put through the ringer in order to even prove the existence of a disability. In places like Port Hope, Fort Frances and elsewhere, persons with disabilities have lost access to local ODSP offices and services, which I think is wrong. I have certainly been told that a significant number of persons being denied support through the ODSP are being forced to endure horribly long waits before their case is brought before the Social Benefits Tribunal, which I think is inexcusable. I am also told that without advocates—legal aid clinics and various other advocates—many disabled people are simply being turned away, disappearing into the system.

This brings us to what I think is perhaps one of the most ominous omissions from this government's social programs and something completely absent in the estimates we are looking at today, and that is evaluation. I really do want to know, how does this government know where those who have left the system have gone, and why? Where is the evaluation outcome? Where is the unbiased, third party proof that the ministry's policies are, from their perspective, working?

I challenge the members of this government to ask that question of your minister, because there is no indication that this government has made any effort to trace program successes beyond the simplistic hot button sound bites when they announce the cuts to welfare every month, the number of people who have gone off welfare. If the government has undertaken strenuous studies, I would ask that they be provided. I would like to see them. Again, it's certainly not in the estimates of the ministry's budget.

There are many other things that are not in the estimates that we'll be asking about. There is no suggestion as to how the government intends to truly revitalize development services in this province—the minister spoke about it, and we need to do a lot more—or how the province really intends to deal with the fact that we do have a growing crisis in terms of aging parents who care for their developmentally challenged adult children.

We also don't know—I heard the minister talk about it yesterday—how the government intends to deal with the fact that only one in five Ontario children with autism are likely to be treated through the new current funding mechanisms, which have not yet flowed, or that pay equity obligations are threatening the ability of our transfer agent partnerships to provide the level of support and care they need and want to give to their client base, or that child care spending in this province continues to decline despite increasing need.

I want to conclude my prepared comments here by encouraging this minister to remember that society will

judge us by how we treat our most vulnerable citizens. I hope, Minister, that you are able to put aside the rhetoric and begin a thoughtful, purposeful and constructive review of your government's approach to community and social services in this province. We need to spend some very serious time here looking at these issues, and I'm glad to have the opportunity.

With that I will close my formal remarks and, if I may, begin asking the minister some questions.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll mark you as undecided on the policies of the ministry.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me just ask you a quick question, which is one you may be able to answer quickly. It was one that sort of came up as a result of previous estimates.

How much money is being transferred from your ministry to other ministries, particularly to the Ministry of Health? In other words, are there significant sums of money, or any sums of money, that have been transferred from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to the Ministry of Health, or to any other ministries, that aren't easy to identify, particularly to the Ministry of Health? It was a question that was brought forward to me and I thought I'd ask it of you right off the top.

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**Hon Mr Baird:** Operationally, we have one of our divisions, the integrated services for children, that the deputy minister appoints jointly to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As for programs, there may be a number of programs in those areas that are jointly administered, but if you're asking whether I am aware of any attempt to holus-bolus transfer funding from one ministry to the other for accounting purposes, I am not familiar with any.

**Mr Gravelle:** So that has not happened? There hasn't been a transfer of funds, other than—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm not familiar with any.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me at the start of this process just bring you back to a question that I've asked you in the House and that my leader, Dalton McGuinty, brought up in the House indeed yesterday. I think as everybody in this room knows, it's been five years since the 21.6% cut in welfare rates, which was essentially the first announcement your government made upon election in 1995. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, shelter costs have gone through the roof. The public health branch of the Ministry of Health has indicated that food costs have gone up dramatically across the province, certainly even more in northern Ontario, where I come from. We know that the use of food banks continues to go up everywhere. Yet there have been no cost-of-living adjustments made in those five years, even after the terrible cuts.

You have said no. You, may I say, gave a rather glib reaction to my question in the House, I thought, in terms of having some fun with it perhaps, which I wish you hadn't. But I appreciate that was your opportunity to do so, and certainly Mr McGuinty asked about it yesterday.

I want to ask you this and tie it into the estimates itself. You say no to a cost-of-living increase despite the

reality of the increased costs all around for people who are living on social assistance. Yet the ministry estimates show there has been a 25% increase in the salaries and wages budget for the political staff in your office. The question I have is, how can you justify boosting the staff budget? If you can explain it, I'd appreciate that as well, but how do you justify boosting the staff budget for your own office by 25% when you say no to a modest cost-of-living adjustment for the 300,000 children whose parents are on social assistance?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The figures in the cost of the political staff reflect two parliamentary assistants; we only have one, so that money won't all be spent. It reflects the fact that we have a minister without portfolio, which is also under the ministry's office expenses, which is somewhat different as well. It also reflects the fact that in this year's estimates I am also the minister responsible for franco-phone affairs and have additional cabinet responsibilities which require additional resources.

I do think it's reasonable to have a discussion about what welfare rates should be. Our policy as a government has been that we want to keep rates at least 10% higher than the average of the other nine provinces. That's one which we've kept. They are between 11.7% and some 34% above the average of the other nine provinces for Ontario Works, and I think 47% above the average of the other nine provinces for the Ontario disability support program.

That's our position. It's straightforward; it's clear. With the greatest of respect, though, Mr Gravelle, your party's position isn't as clear. Your leader said he will raise welfare rates; then he said he won't. Just last week, you said he will again. Yet in your campaign document, where you costed out the commitments you made to the people of the province of Ontario, you included not a dime to pay for that. So there has to be a degree of commitment that is not there from the Ontario Liberal Party, sir. It is not there.

**Mr Gravelle:** That's not true.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Is it your policy, then, in the next general election? Will you commit today on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party to give a full cost-of-living adjustment retroactive to 1995? If it isn't, say so.

**Mr Gravelle:** Obviously, Minister, this is an opportunity for me to question you. We are committed to a cost-of-living adjustment increase to those on social assistance. Dalton McGuinty has made it clear—

**Hon Mr Baird:** And in 2003 you'll make it retroactive, sir?

**Mr Gravelle:** —he is committed to that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Dalton McGuinty hasn't made it clear.

**Mr Gravelle:** Minister, I am questioning you, if I may. I don't think you've in any way explained the 25% increase in your staff. You've made a few references to some of the increase, but that's a pretty massive increase in terms of your costs.

May I say, too, no matter what you say, that you are obviously very conscious of the extraordinarily higher

costs in terms of accommodation, shelter costs and food costs; no matter what, you've got to deal with that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I agree with Dalton McGuinty.

**Mr Gravelle:** I just hope you will be considering that. But you still have a 25% increase and your ministry staff costs are pretty massive. You explain it how? By an extra parliamentary assistant?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, we don't have an extra parliamentary assistant.

**Mr Gravelle:** No, you don't, so you're using your staff to—

**Hon Mr Baird:** What I'm saying is that in the budget, in the estimates, they budgeted for two parliamentary assistants. In fact, we've had a 50% reduction in the number of parliamentary assistants at the ministry.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me ask you about the clawback of the national child tax benefit, which—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I would put on the record that I do support Dalton McGuinty's position on welfare rates. He was very clear that he didn't want to raise welfare rates, and I have a press release to indicate that. I agree with Mr McGuinty when he said it on that occasion.

**Mr Gravelle:** We certainly hope you will be looking at this, Minister, as an issue. We're going to chase you all the way. We feel very strongly about it.

Let me ask you about the national children's benefit, which you have clawed back from those most in need, which has been pretty much recognized as being a real detriment to helping improve the lives of those who most need it. Give me your quick justification for it and explain how you've used the money in specific terms to help those who are most in need.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think that's a fair question. It's an area where I think reasonable people can disagree.

One of the new relationships that we have with the federal government, with the social union undertaken by my predecessor the Honourable Janet Ecker and the former Minister of Human Resources Development, Pierre Pettigrew, in the establishment of new social policy within provincial jurisdiction was to have a collaborative approach. So they worked with all provinces and territories and the federal government on this program.

There was an interest on the provinces' part to be able to have their constitutional jurisdiction recognized in the setting of social policy in this area. One of the challenges and one of the priorities that this government has made, and that a number of governments of all political stripes across the country have made, is to make it more attractive to work. We do so much for those who fall below a certain income level in terms of social assistance, whether it's monetary or drug supports and other benefits, that we don't do enough for those working poor, those folks with low and modest incomes.

That's been an incredible priority of the ministry, and one of the areas where we provide additional support through that is the design of the national child benefit, where those individuals, when they leave social assistance, can now become eligible for a new benefit that they weren't entitled to under their old circumstance, which makes it an advantage and provides additional support to



those working poor. That's one of the initiatives, along with the Ontario child care supplement for working families. All of that money that is reduced from welfare benefits is, through public reporting, required to be invested in children's initiatives, and the Ontario government's choice is the Ontario child care supplement for working families. We've not only had the NCB but also the supplement now going to work to provide support to low- and modest-income working Ontarians. We've also taken a good chunk of folks right off the tax rolls to try to recognize the real struggles that modest-income working families have.

I can appreciate reasonable people can disagree on that. That's our public policy choice. Mr Chrétien and the Liberal Party have been very supportive of allowing the provinces to do that. They developed the national child benefit supplement with that in mind, and a good number of provinces across the country have taken a similar approach, though it's not unanimous.

**Mr Gravelle:** We sure do disagree. I guess that's why, when I hear your opening statement in terms of some of the concerns that you expressed—how they fly in the face of actually how you do treat people who are truly living in poverty and what an extraordinary amount of help that might be for those who are living in poverty. Obviously those who are living in poverty have a more difficult time simply looking after their children, feeding their children, and the benefit could be of extraordinary help to them. So it's a strong disagreement. Obviously two provinces have chosen to not claw it back. I believe Newfoundland and New Brunswick have not clawed it back. So there certainly is a strong belief by a lot of people that that should not be happening.

Let me move on to something else. How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** I show you with about 10 minutes, Mr Gravelle.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me talk to you about Andersen Consulting, if I may. It was obviously an open-ended contract that will net the firm a staggering amount of money. The Provincial Auditor has sharply criticized your government's signing of the contract and has continued to indicate that he has great concerns about it. Indeed, one of the realities is that, although I want to get from you some explanation as to how you think you managed to renegotiate it, you're actually very much stuck with the original part of the agreement. We know there were some extraordinary charges, and I have very real concerns with the directions, some of the decisions that have been made as a result of their advice regardless in terms of the business transformation project. I hope to get to that later.

There's no line item in the estimates that indicates how much this boondoggle is costing taxpayers, so can you tell us how much has been spent this year in terms of paying Andersen Consulting—this fiscal year and last as well?

1630

**Hon Mr Baird:** The entire figure in terms of what's payable to Andersen Consulting for the original contract

is costs not to exceed \$180 million. So I want to correct you in your statement that it's an open-ended contract. In fact, it's not. There is a cap, and that's something we maintained.

I've been one who's been very clear in discussions with members on all sides of the House in terms of my feelings on this project. I certainly think early on the project was mismanaged. I've said in the past and I'll say again that I'm not prepared to defend that early mismanagement of the project, but the good news is that over the last two years things have got on track. We've been able to address some of the challenges that faced the project early on, and I think it's going to yield incredible benefits to the taxpayers of this province in terms of effective delivery of the social assistance system.

**Mr Gravelle:** We already know there wasn't. I mean, we already know that the original amounts of money that were given out to Andersen were totally inappropriate; they were being paid for work they didn't even do.

**Hon Mr Baird:** What work were they paid for that they didn't do, specifically?

**Mr Gravelle:** In terms of the actual, precise job they were hired for, ultimately they were being paid in advance, were they not?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No. What work are you citing that they were paid for that they didn't do?

**Mr Gravelle:** The auditor expressed real concerns about the fact that they were being paid ultimately for work—I guess one of the real questions too is, ultimately they're reaping benefits from the drop in people from the social assistance rolls, whether or not they're responsible for it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, not at all.

In terms of being able to provide you with a specific answer, you mentioned that the auditor had said that Andersen was being paid for work that they didn't do. If you have a specific example of that, I'd like to respond to it.

**Mr Gravelle:** I'll come back to that, but I want to just talk to you about the cap issue, if I may. You did send a letter dated—what was the date on it? It was back in April, I think—April 27 to Mr Peters, the Provincial Auditor. There are several parts that I'm obviously interested in.

At one point you talk about, "The cap has been reaffirmed as per the original agreement. Specifically, [the service delivery model] will be implemented within the cap of \$180 million," which is what you just said. But then it goes on to say, "Eligible expenditures outside the cap are limited to the terms allowable within the agreement." I'm not a very smart guy maybe, but that just strikes me as a bit of gobbledegook. More specifically, it suggests to me that the expenditures could be just about anything.

I wanted to know if you or your staff could explain to me what exactly that means: "Eligible expenditures outside the cap are limited to the terms allowable within the agreement." That says to me that there is some room there for a lot more expenses.



**Hon Mr Baird:** Let me give you a specific example. You are wise to make an inquiry there. With the original contract, there were terms describing specifically what type of process we wanted designed, what type of process we wanted built, and what type of process we wanted rolled out. That also included specifically the features of that. If we want to, at the ministry, make changes after the fact, after we've signed the agreement, after we've both agreed to the terms, obviously they would fall outside of the cap.

I'll give you a specific example. With the *M. v. H.* court decision and the subsequent legislation passed by the Legislative Assembly about same-sex spouses, that's obviously something that was not part of the original social assistance system and can have a potentially significant effect on the design of the technology; it's another field that's got to be added. That had to be added in a whole series of ways with both Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program. So there's an example of a change which was not contemplated in the initial contract that was added after the fact. That certainly would be in the six figures, not anything greater than that. But there's a specific example. It's almost like if you were getting a new kitchen installed and you decided to get a microwave oven later as opposed to at the outset; you're obviously going to have to pay more than the original estimate.

**Mr Gravelle:** As you know, the Provincial Auditor has been interested in this contract from the very beginning and has done a follow-up report. There's been lots going on since then. Indeed, there's a certain expectation that the ministry has to further respond to the auditor. Is there another further response to the auditor that you're preparing or have prepared or have sent to him in terms of some of the questions he has?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The auditor put his original report out in the last Parliament, which you would be familiar with. He put out a subsequent report that I know the member for Nickel Belt would be familiar with. He's indicated on both of those reports he would be coming back with further recommendations. I guess we'll await the public release of his report, which I certainly welcome.

I think the Provincial Auditor is one of the best friends the taxpayers in this province have. He's given us some incredibly good advice. It's been helpful for the ministry. It's been helpful for the government and Management Board in terms of the design of common purpose procurement projects in the future. For me personally, he's been a good source of advice and counsel through his reports and recommendations. I don't think we'll see eye to eye with him on everything, but we certainly have greatly benefited from his advice and counsel, and I think he's done his job with care.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me refer back to my earlier comments which you challenged me on. In terms of the auditor's report, this is actually from his report from June 20, 2000, this past June: "The auditor concluded in the 1998 report that the ministry could not demonstrate an auditable business case and therefore provide assurance

there was value for money in the agreement. This concern was based on the significant unnecessary payments made to Andersen Consulting, the lack of control over the consultant's rates by the ministry and the significant failure to meet the ... revised project timetable contract." I think that is basically saying money went to them that shouldn't have gone to them.

Further on, he talks about "attribution of benefits." "At issue is whether fees paid to Andersen were correctly attributable to the business transformation project. The Provincial Auditor reported that Andersen was paid \$55 million as of July 1999 for benefits from the earlier opportunity initiatives that are not attributable to the project's primary objective of developing and implementing new technology to replace CIMS and to provide the components required to deliver the income support in the Ontario Works program."

Those are two examples, may I say, in response to you saying there was never money given out that shouldn't have been given out. The auditor has suggested it has been. If you want to comment on either one of those—the fact is he was very specific about that. There were unnecessary payments, payments made that weren't attributable to the actual goal of the contract itself. So what's going on?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think the statement that I disagreed with and challenged you on was Andersen Consulting being paid for work they didn't do; the initiative, for example, on the early opportunity savings. Here's one issue on which the auditor, the ministry and I have an honest difference of opinion. We believe the early opportunity savings are good. I personally strongly support them. I think the ministry's done an exceptionally good job in that regard.

Looking at the consolidated verification process, the early opportunity initiative you cited, here's an initiative that you would wonder why government, municipalities and the province wouldn't have done years ago. I suspect if they could have done it years ago, they would have; they didn't. So above and beyond all the fraud measures the government has taken, separate from and above and beyond all that, the consolidated verification process has yielded incredible savings to the taxpayers. Through a common purpose procurement arrangement, Andersen Consulting is entitled to one year's worth of savings, or a maximum of one year's worth, and the taxpayers get those savings ad infinitum.

I think it's bringing greater integrity to the process, and I strongly support the consolidated verification process. Obviously Andersen Consulting has undertaken that initiative and that activity with the active support of the ministry and, in this case, the minister. An example of that which I've cited in the past—and I can pull it out for the member for Nickel Belt, but I suspect she doesn't want to see it again—is the gold credit card. Andersen Consulting, on their file-by-file review of all the cases and working with a number of information-sharing agreements that the ministry didn't have in place before they undertook that initiative—

**The Chair:** Minister, the time has expired. Perhaps it can be picked up in the next round. We now turn to Ms Martel for the third party.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Thank you, Minister, for being here. Let me just follow up on some of the exchange that just went on. I'm glad to see that Mr Maves is here because he's also a member of the public accounts committee and can confirm the concern we had with Andersen Consulting.

**1640**

I was interested actually in the contradiction of your statements. On the one hand you said the auditor is probably the best friend that taxpayers have, but on the other hand, when the auditor very clearly pointed out to you in not one but two reports that he firmly believed Andersen was paid for work that had nothing to do with the business transformation project, you tell the committee here today you would disagree with that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** But the statement was—

**Ms Martel:** You made it absolutely clear to the committee that this was—

**Hon Mr Baird:** The statement was "work that they had never done."

**Ms Martel:** Exactly, work that they had never done that had anything to do with the business transformation project. The auditor made it clear to us that this was work that was being done by your staff, that was already ongoing, that you gave Andersen Consulting credit for and then proceeded to pay them \$15.5 million. He said that on more than one occasion during our committee's hearings. You may have a disagreement with him, and I appreciate that I'm sure you do, but this was certainly a point that was reinforced not at one committee meeting but at a number. Regrettably, the auditor repeated his concern not just in his first review of Andersen Consulting but in his second report of December 3, 1999. We look forward to the auditor's report, which I gather is coming November 21, because I know he was going to be looking at the agreement and we'll be interested to see what he thinks of it.

Minister, I want to actually go back to comments you made on Monday in the Legislature. Our leader asked you what I thought was a very important question about the chaos that's going on at the ODSP. He referred to a report that was done by your staff, which I have here. I'm sure you have a copy of it. You said the following: "It's a report we've seen, and we're working on implementing much of the information contained in it. The member opposite will want to be honest with the House and tell people that it's a report from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, a union that I wouldn't characterize as a supporter of the government." This report was based on a survey of staff who work in the ODSP, correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** If I could, you characterize it as a staff report. It is not a report of the Ministry of Community and Social Services; it's a report of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, which is very different from characterizing it as a staff report. A staff report would lead one to believe it was somehow a corporate document, which it is not.

I think in the Legislature, and then again today, you somehow take offence with my comments about the political activities of the union. These are people who have stormed public meetings, and screamed and yelled and hooted and hollered at meetings that I've had in Nepean-Carleton. I would not characterize an agency which has spent tens of thousands of dollars to try to politically defeat the government—I don't think it's an unfair statement to characterize the union leadership as not being any neutral arbiter of either the facts or the presentation of the same.

**Ms Martel:** If I might, the question was, this report is based on a survey of staff who work in the ODSP. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** As I understand.

**Ms Martel:** Twenty-nine local offices participated in the survey, representing all regional offices—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Twenty-nine union member staff, not offices. It implies it was a corporate activity, Ms Martel, which it's not.

**Ms Martel:** Are these people who work for you, Minister, the people who work in ODSP?

**Hon Mr Baird:** These are employees of the ministry.

**Ms Martel:** OK. These are people who work every day on the front line with the disabled in this province?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes.

**Ms Martel:** So why would you treat their views with such contempt?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think if you look at the transcript of my comments the other day, you will see that I said there are a number of initiatives, concerns and suggestions they brought forth which we looked at, which we are even, in some cases, implementing. I've taken the time and, as I said in the House, visited your leader's constituency. I met with staff in the Kenora office and specifically asked them about their concerns and certainly heard that concern. I've spoken to staff in our London office and in our Ottawa office who have expressed some concern. It's obviously a new program. A new model has been used. I don't think anyone suggested it's perfect or that it can't be improved or built upon.

We have undertaken a business process review beginning last March to examine the delivery model that's been undertaken in the ministry offices with the Ontario disability support program. The objectives were to develop and implement an approach to service delivery that would ensure consistency and efficiency in service delivery, in business practices, in office organization and staff workload.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, if I might, I'm going to get to that. I've got the comments in front of me, and I was in the House. The inference clearly was that the report had no value because it was done by OPSEU.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's your inference.

**Ms Martel:** I was there, and I'm looking at your comments which—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I would say it's not a neutral third party report.



**Ms Martel:** Minister, it was done based on a survey of your staff. I've got copies of the questions that were sent which staff were asked to respond to. Are you saying they responded to something differently, that they didn't respond to those questions, that OPSEU made this up?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No.

**Ms Martel:** Why do you express such disdain with respect to what the results have been and the fact that the report was even done? That's clearly the perception that came across.

**Hon Mr Baird:** My point is, and I repeat again, I don't think it's an independent third party report, as your leader was trying to present it in the House. I took issue with it. I disagreed with him. Reasonable people can disagree. I guess that's an example of it.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, I asked you in my response why it was that you did not want to meet with Bob Eaton. In fact, I suggested that he had called your office just after this report had been released and asked for a meeting and was turned down flat.

There was an exchange between you and I in the House after the question was over, so I called Mr Eaton again and Mr Eaton confirmed that just days after this report was completed, which was in July, he called your EA, Mr Dykstra. He asked for a meeting and said, "Our folks are having a heck of a time delivering a program we know is inferior." And he says, again today, that Mr Dykstra's response was that under no circumstances would he advise you, the minister, to meet with Eaton to resolve service delivery problems. Dykstra said this is a labour relations issue and suggested the deputy minister should deal with it.

It seems to me your front-line staff are so concerned about what is happening and they are so concerned about their ability or inability to deliver services to the disabled that they wanted to talk to you directly about that. Why would you not do that, especially when this is a signature piece of your government?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think the inference that was presented in the Legislative Assembly was that I would not meet with staff within the ministry, when I regularly do. I've gone out of my way on a number of occasions to talk to folks who work in the ODSP office to get their thoughts and their opinions, and that was contrary to the presentation of the facts as had been made in the assembly.

As far as being ad nauseam, at great lengths, through staff relations with a particular employee, I don't think it's appropriate that we do it at a legislative committee.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, if I might, I didn't make an allegation; I made a statement. The statement was that the staff who deal with this program are so concerned that they wanted to meet with you directly about it and they were turned down.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Bob Eaton doesn't work with this program.

**Ms Martel:** He represents those folks. He made it clear that the staff wanted to meet. He saw your comments that said you have no objections whatsoever to

meeting with staff to learn their views, so he called Mr Dykstra again on Monday to ask for a meeting and he hasn't heard back.

So I'm asking you, given this is allegedly a signature piece of your government, given that there clearly are problems here, are you prepared to meet with your front-line staff who work at the ODSP to hear what they have to say about this program?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I regularly meet with front-line staff in the ministry. Again, I'm not going to go on at great length in terms of discussing a particular staff member and our relations with same.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, OK. Can you tell me how many ODSP offices there are in the province now?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's 79. I said 50 to 100, and it's 79. So I was close.

**Ms Martel:** Can you tell me how many have been closed in the last year?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'd have to check and get back to you.

**Ms Martel:** My next question is, do you have plans to close more offices in the next year?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think, in terms of the management of the program, I wouldn't rule it out. Is there a corporate decision that I've taken to go around closing offices? No. I think it's always a challenge in providing services in a ministry like the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which affects virtually every community. Obviously, we're not present in every community.

Your leader has raised concerns within his own constituency about issues, which were presented in the usual fashion in which that member presents the facts, that I think was not fair. I don't think there's any thought—for example, I think he brought up a concern about an office in Fort Frances—that we would expect the disabled in Fort Frances to make their way to Kenora to get service. I don't think there's ever been that statement. I think that suggestion was probably a leap.

**Ms Martel:** Well, Minister, if I might—

**Hon Mr Baird:** We don't necessarily have a field office in every single community in the province of Ontario.

**Ms Martel:** But you had a field office in Fort Frances and you recently closed it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It hasn't been closed. You're wrong.

**Ms Martel:** You've announced that it's going to be closed.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No.

**Ms Martel:** And clients have gotten letters in the mail stating that.

1650

**Hon Mr Baird:** There was a case, there was one individual staff member, which I can get the information on.

The ministry's local office in Fort Frances in fact has not been closed. There remains a full-time income support specialist, a probation officer and a vacant client service representative position located at that site. The income support specialist continues to be available for service to the public five days a week during the ministry



core hours. As the result of a client service representative contract expiry on October 20, case management responsibilities have been temporarily relocated to the Kenora local office. This provides greater access for all clients in the Kenora and Rainy River areas, as there is a larger pool of client service representative staff available to respond to client needs. Notice was sent to clients on October 17 advising them of these temporary changes.

To support the income support specialist in providing customer service, the following has been put in place: the voice mail in the office has been changed to say that clients can call the 1-800 number in Kenora to speak to a client service representative who has been dedicated to that caseload. They can leave items in a drop box that will be collected and sent to Kenora on a regular basis and they can mail that in to Kenora themselves or can access the northern development and mines office in Fort Frances to have items faxed or photocopied.

**Ms Martel:** For the client who used to come in the door and get service from your customer service representative—

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll come to them.

**Ms Martel:** You'll come to them? You're going to drive to them in Atikokan?

**Hon Mr Baird:** There's a thought that in the Fort Frances issue, which you raised, an individual could work out of Kenora for three weeks a month and then Fort Frances one week, by appointment. Not all the services require in-person meetings. We can schedule appointments and be able to reach those people who are far away geographically or, through a disability, are unable to make it into the office.

**Ms Martel:** The Fort Frances office was already serving people within a radius of 150 kilometres. They come in from Atikokan, Rainy River; so it was already serving a huge geographic area. People who used to go and get front-line service now have an option of getting on the telephone or, if they want to talk to a real, live body in person, they have to go to Kenora, right?

**Hon Mr Baird:** There has never been a suggestion that anyone has to go to Kenora.

**Ms Martel:** Where do they go to get front-line service?

**Hon Mr Baird:** If they need front-line service, we can make an appointment and come to Fort Frances and provide the service.

**Ms Martel:** But you just finished saying that your customer service is gone and cases are temporarily re-assigned to Kenora.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I will give you a more specific response from Jessica Hill, our assistant deputy minister of program management.

**Ms Jessica Hill:** The situation is that if people would like an appointment, there will be client service representatives visiting the Fort Frances office based on scheduled appointments. This approach to delivering the program is not one that is restricted to Fort Frances. Many of our ODSP offices have moved from less of a drop-in situation to more of an appointment basis. It actu-

ally satisfies many customers because they aren't coming into the office and having to wait for service. They can set the appointment in advance.

**Ms Martel:** You said that they would be there one week in every month?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That was an example.

**Ms Hill:** I'd actually have to get the specific schedule for you.

**Ms Martel:** Forgive me, but how is that providing timely service to clients in need? You just said that they can come into the office right now and they might have to wait. Well, at least they can come into the office and wait today—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Give me an example of a service.

**Ms Martel:** If they want to come in and make an application to ODSP, they could do that now. You're saying to them that they can make an appointment and they can meet with someone and, "We'll send someone from the Kenora office to do that, but it might be one week in every month." I'm trying to figure out how that's providing timely and adequate service to people.

**Ms Hill:** Actually, the majority of clients on ODSP are clients who have been with the program for a number of years. It's true that there are new clients, and the first point of contact would be the 1-800 line. If there was some urgency in terms of processing an application form, I believe the office would make every effort to ensure that a client service representative could meet with them as quickly as possible.

One of the reasons this was done, quite on a practical level, was the ending of a contract. However, one of the benefits has been that there are a number of other communities that currently have service this way and it has worked satisfactorily. One of them is Elliot Lake, and there are other examples of where this service is delivered this way.

**Ms Martel:** People in Elliot Lake travel to where? Sudbury?

**Ms Hill:** I'm not sure. I'd have to get back to you.

**Ms Martel:** I'd like to know the kilometres, because the drive to Kenora and to Fort Frances is going to be almost 300 kilometres.

**Ms Hill:** From?

**Ms Martel:** From Kenora to Fort Frances, it's going to be almost 300 kilometres one way. Right?

**Ms Hill:** But for whom? If the client service representative—

**Ms Martel:** No. You're trying to send staff there who are going to support that office.

**Ms Hill:** Right, on a periodic basis.

**Ms Martel:** That's going to be a major requirement for some staff person.

**Ms Hill:** That's right. But there are many communities—

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's a major effort, but we're happy to provide service for the disabled. That's our responsibility. That's our job, which we do with great pride.

**Ms Martel:** And if you would actually keep the person in Fort Frances, you'd probably provide a better

service, right? Because you're saying to me that there's going to be appointments and people shouldn't worry. I'm wondering about the timeliness of their being able to respond to serious issues. I don't believe it's the job of the staff of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to be delivering the service on your behalf; they've got enough to do. It seems to me that if you were interested in providing front-line appropriate service, you'd either have a new position in that office or continue to fill the contract.

**Hon Mr Baird:** One contract just expired, so I think it's more an operational issue currently.

**Ms Hill:** Currently, but I think what might be helpful is if we provide some information about how this service model has worked for other communities.

**Ms Martel:** Can I ask, in June 1998, when ODSP opened, were all of the offices at full complement when the program began?

**Ms Hill:** I would have to get back to you.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't think any new program would be at a full complement on day one. We will get back to you with a specific answer, but I can't imagine that any program on day one is operating at a full complement.

**Ms Martel:** OK. Let me ask a few more questions like that, then. Can you tell me right now what is the permanent staff complement for ODSP?

**Ms Hill:** I don't have the figure. I'd have to get back to you about what the permanent complement is.

**Ms Martel:** OK. Could you tell me how that permanent complement now might relate to the staff complement that was in place when the program opened in 1998?

**Ms Hill:** I'll have to get back to you with the specific figures.

**Ms Martel:** Let me tell you why I'm going down this road. Let me tell you—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I can tell you there's no cost-saving initiative corporately, in terms of the minister, to try and say "Let's reduce staff in the ODSP office."

**Ms Martel:** No. My problem is, was there enough staff there at the beginning to make the program work effectively? That's why I want to start from whether or not when this program began it was staffed adequately. Because one of the things I did—and we can disagree about the report from OPSEU—is take a look at the complaints. I have serious concerns about whether or not the staff who are in place are able to meet their work which is, I think, what they want to do. So I'd like to know if, when the program opened, it was fully staffed. All right?

Second, what's the staff complement now? I'd like to see the difference between the June 1998 figures and what we have now, permanent staff.

**Ms Hill:** OK.

**Ms Martel:** Then I'd like to know how many temporary staff are working in the ODSP offices now, and I'd like to know how many permanent staff vacancies are open right now.

Minister, so you'll know why I'm going here, I'm concerned that some regional offices are managing their

constraints by not filling these vacancies and that is why we are seeing problems in the ODSP offices. My concern comes not only from what I read in the OPSEU report, but frankly we continue to have a large number of cases in our office as well. It doesn't go away. It just goes up and down in terms of sheer numbers. We have a very good working relationship with our ODSP office. So it's not a staff problem; it's a problem of volume and whether there's enough staff to deal with it.

1700

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's a new program.

**Ms Martel:** I understand that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I wouldn't want to leave you with the impression that I'm here or that anyone from the ministry is here to say that it's a perfect program and we're operating at 100%. It's a new program. I think it's been very successful. If anything, we're a victim of our success. It has been very well subscribed. It provides good supports to people with disabilities. Like any new program of this size, a \$2-billion-plus program, it's in the first two years and it's not going to be all smooth sailing, but I think the staff have done a pretty good job in the program.

As an MPP—not just in the 18 months, but in the last two or three years—generally speaking, we've got good service. Is there room for improvement? Yes. Would we suggest anything other than that? No.

**Ms Martel:** I have a couple more questions about staffing. How many offices are using temporary agency staff to fill in, and how many offices would be using unclassified staff to fill in? There is a difference between those two categories of which you are aware.

It would be helpful if you could provide a breakdown of the ODSP offices, office by office, in terms of the temporary and permanent staff vacancies. I'd like to see if it's in a particular region, because that would either support or negate my concern that a regional office is not funding these positions or not filling these positions because they're managing under constraints.

I want to go back to the ministry's response. This would be follow-up that you did with respect to ODSP. It's very clear from this document that you're going to maintain the team concept, case management approach. I want to ask you why you're doing that, Minister, because in the review that was done, biased or not—we have our differences of opinion about that—clearly there was an overwhelming recognition that the team concept of dealing with cases was not working. Some of the comments about that were pretty clear: "utter chaos," "no tracking," "no clear responsibility for tasks," "no accountability," "confusing to clients," "too much duplication," "no one knows what the other is doing," "tried it but too many mistakes."

Am I clear then to assume that this is a concept that you're going to continue in these offices?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I take issue with "utter chaos." I've visited our offices in various parts of the province. "Utter chaos" is extreme rhetoric. Are there improvements required? Can we do a better job? Do we recognize that



in this new program there are enhancements that can be made by working with our front-line staff? Do we want to listen? Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes. But I take issue with the crisis. I think it goes further.

We've done an in-depth workload analysis of the delivery of the program. That has been undertaken. As a result, significant design improvements in terms of the organizational design will take place just this fall, beginning this fall. I think if there are enhancements we can make to the program to see how it works, we'll do that and we'll obviously evaluate their success.

Are we prepared to throw the baby out with the bathwater? No. Reasonable people, I suppose, will disagree. We are reorganizing our staff into smaller teams, which we hope will enhance the accountability and the customer service. We believe that this will also address some of the concerns raised by staff and the union with regard to the operation of the program.

Like every initiative, we'll make what we see as enhancements and we'll see what the result is and want to monitor closely. I don't think anyone is pretending that this new \$2-billion-plus program is being perfectly run and that we can't do a better job. I think we've always got to be open to listening to new ideas and suggestions. But at the first sign of concern we can't throw the baby out with the bathwater either.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, if I might, the phrase "utter chaos" did not come from me; it came from your staff. So if you take exception to it, you'll have to take that up with them, I guess. Maybe you could in a meeting with them, if you agree to it.

But the point is, overwhelmingly, if you look at the results that came back, the number one concern had to do with this team approach—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I've heard that myself.

**Ms Martel:** —and whether or not it's smaller is not going to resolve the issue.

I raise this concern because we had the same problem at the Family Responsibility Office, and when the auditor did his audit last year, he made it very clear that that kind of concept did not work, did not work for clients, particularly, and did not work for staff.

I'm wondering why you want to go down that road when your staff are trying to tell you very clearly, "This is not working, not for us, and not for the clients we're trying to serve." Why do that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I've heard the concerns myself. I heard them in Kenora when I talked to some of our staff there. I heard them in London last year when I spoke with some of our staff there. Clearly there is not unanimity on that. I think, though, that when concerns come forward, even serious concerns, to just say, "Listen, we're going to scrap the whole program and go back to the old way," suggests that a case-based approach is a perfect solution in and of itself, and it is not. There are significant problems as well with having assigned caseloads if someone is unavailable, if someone is on vacation, if someone is sick. We did hear a lot of concerns about that and want to seek design and service improvements.

Are we hell-bent on change at all costs? No. We've implemented a great new program. It's doing great things across the province. I think we're doing a pretty good job implementing it. Some concerns have been expressed. We have some concerns. We're looking at some enhancements to try to deliver the program better. We'll watch those. Some of them are just being undertaken this fall, and we will see what the results are. I don't think anyone is married to a particular approach. We're trying a new way. Every time you do something new, obviously there will be room for improvement, and no one denies that or suggests otherwise.

**Ms Martel:** Do the enhancements include adding more staff?

**Ms Hill:** Not currently.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Not currently, but that's not something I would rule out in the future. I don't know if there is any area within government anywhere in the last 50 years in which you would say, "If we just hired more staff, everything would be hunky-dory." We have to strike a reasonable balance. I strongly believe—and I don't apologize for this—that we have to try to put every single dollar we possibly can into the final product, whether it's services for autistic children, services for the disabled, services for people with a developmental disability, services for people who find themselves in financial difficulty. We want the administrative cost to be as low as possible. We could probably provide better customer service if we doubled the budget on administration, but I don't agree with that.

**Ms Martel:** I am asking specifically about the ODSP. Let me get back to it. Is this a growth program?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Definitely. The bottom is going up. It's a very popular program.

**Ms Martel:** The program is going up and you're not going to hire new staff. What's the growth factor?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Are we going to state that we won't hire any new staff if the program grows because it's so popular? No.

**Ms Martel:** What's the ministry's estimate of the growth, then, Minister?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Some 2% to 4%.

**Ms Martel:** Every year?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Is that fair? Two per cent.

**Ms Martel:** Every year, is that right?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's the estimate. It's been much more oversubscribed than we would have anticipated in the first years because it's such a great program. We've done such a great job in terms of helping people with disabilities.

**Ms Martel:** You ought to talk to some of my constituents because they've got a whole different view.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's not perfect.

**Ms Martel:** Your own front-line staff have a different view. I know you don't want to hear that, but that is a fact.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I talk to a lot of folks who think the program is pretty good. Is it perfect? No. Is there room



for improvement? Yes. But I talk to a lot of folks who are pretty—

**Ms Martel:** Do you have some problems? Yes. I'm trying to figure out what your staffing complement is going to be and whether or not you're going to meet it. It's not only a question of adding new staff, are you going to fill in the temporary vacancies and the permanent vacancies that you have now? That's why I want those numbers, because I think it would be very interesting to see how many people aren't working in the program now who probably should be.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Certainly at the regional level we do all we can to recruit.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Hopefully we can continue this line in the next questioning. Now to the government side.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** I wasn't going to say much at the beginning of this. My colleagues beside me have some questions they wanted to ask but because of my presence on the public accounts committee, I was implicated to be a corroborative witness to Ms Martel's charges earlier on. I thought I would take the initial few minutes, as a member of the public accounts committee, to answer some of the charges she made and a couple of other issues I'd heard.

1710

The ODSP offices, some of which have been consolidated—I lost one in my own riding of Niagara Falls. Before it closed, I received concerns, mostly from the employees who worked there but also from some of their clients. Since it's closed, I haven't received one phone call from either staff or clients. That may change after I've made that statement today. Ms Martel may get on the phone quickly, but that is the case.

There's another statement I'd like to make. I know if the minister met with Mr Eaton every time he asked, he'd probably be the only person you ever met within the ministry, and I know there are other opinions you value. You've been unfairly criticized for not meeting with some particular front-line staff. In my own experience, I've been with you on several occasions when you have met with front-line staff and asked both management and union officials to leave the room so that you could have an open and clear dialogue with front-line staff. You've done that on many occasions, only a few of which were with me. You actually deserve to be commended for the efforts you've taken to that end. I don't think there are enough people who do that.

More to the point, I want to talk about some of the charges brought forward by Ms Martel and her attempt to enlist me as a corroborative witness on the BTP.

**Ms Martel:** It was a unanimous report out of public accounts, Bart.

**Mr Maves:** It's good that you say that because all the recommendations were answered by the ministry and yourself. I want to note that the contract was something you, as the minister, inherited, and you also inherited the Provincial Auditor's report.

Ms Martel talked about Andersen getting some benefit payments for things they didn't do. I recall at the time the consolidated verification process being mentioned by the ministry as something that Andersen actually developed a whole software program for. In fact, people they identified through that software program as inappropriately receiving benefits were receiving benefits from two or three different places at the same time. That was deleted from the system, and those were savings. Those were attributed to Andersen and it was appropriate. At the time of our hearings, that contribution by Andersen of a software program for that purpose was unknown by the auditor, so that was something that came up during public accounts that is important to note.

The Provincial Auditor also said it wasn't clear that the business case was done at the outset of the contract. I think you have acknowledged that and said that was the case, but since that time, a business case has been completed. I can't remember the firm that completed the business case. Ms Ewart may remember.

**Ms Bonnie Ewart:** It was the firm of Hickling, Lewis and Brod.

**Mr Maves:** That's right. I recall that they determined there was a robust business case for the contract that ended up being signed with Andersen and the project they were undertaking, and at one point they identified, when the project was in full completion, \$200 million a year in net benefits to the province of Ontario. That could change a little bit. If we continue our tremendous performance on moving people from welfare to work, some of that benefit may decline, but that's a good reason to have a decline, by having people at work.

Furthermore, of the charges made across the way, the Provincial Auditor did talk about savings being attributed perhaps to Andersen that weren't there. I think the Provincial Auditor's case was that there are people leaving welfare perhaps because of a robust economy. With this government's excellent stewardship of the economy and the booming economy we have experienced in the past five years, so many people are leaving welfare for work. Was Andersen being inappropriately attributed with the welfare decline there and therefore receiving money from the benefits pool? In actual fact that also has been taken care of by the ministry, as all of those people who lose welfare for reasons such as a booming economy and getting into work, which had nothing to do with the Andersen project and the early savings opportunities you identified, do not get attributed to the business transformation project. I think I'm not misspeaking on this. That's probably the understanding.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Right.

**Mr Maves:** The Provincial Auditor said at the time that he was concerned about—and the members opposite talked about—unchecked escalating rates charged by Andersen. I think at the time when you inherited the contract, you were similarly concerned, but I also recall, during our public accounts hearings, your sending a letter to the Provincial Auditor and the committee saying that you had renegotiated that contract and in fact reduced the rates, as well as putting a check on their escalation.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Indeed, we reduced it by 39.5%, retroactive to January 1 of the year.

**Mr Maves:** Thank you very much.

Two more things: there was a concern—

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** Chairman, I believe I should be able to hear Mr Maves. Could he speak a little louder? I can hear the minister.

**Mr Maves:** Sure.

Two more things on this. Again, there was a concern the ministry wasn't charging all of its own costs to the benefit pool. I'm not sure if it was Mr Gravelle or Ms Martel who brought that forward. I also think that has been taken care of. We have a system in place. That was brought up during public accounts, that there is indeed a system in place to ensure that all of the ministry's costs are appropriately billed to the benefits pool. Is that not correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That is correct.

**Mr Maves:** Lastly, there was some concern that there wasn't a senior manager in place. One of the very first things he identified was he thought there should be a senior manager in place to oversee the project. I also believe that's been put in place.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We now have an assistant deputy minister dedicated to the project. It has the active attention of the deputy and the minister and of senior management within the ministry.

It had been a difficult project early on, but I think as the project has matured, as we move into the final phase of it, it's going to yield great results for the taxpayers. It's going to be a difficult journey that's well worth taking, not just with respect to the province but with respect to municipalities and with respect to those people who turn to government for income support and, in addition, to those people who pay the freight, to ensure that only those folks who are eligible for social assistance are receiving it.

We have 30-year-old technology at the ministry. Sometimes we almost have to go to archaeologists to find people who even know how to write the programs for some of these machines, to scour the province and do head-hunting to find people who have retired who can come back and do some basic programming for things like data conversion. If it was easy, governments before us would have done it. In fact, the thing that's most interesting is the previous government, which correctly recognized the need to change the way we do business—I think had they been re-elected they probably would have gone along the same road.

Would it have been easier to do nothing, like in the past 10 or 15 years? Yes, it would have been. Would it have been the right thing to do? No. I think we've done a reasonably good job over the last year or two in terms of getting the project on track. I think the benefits are going to be significant for the taxpayers. If you think of the savings that will take place in terms of the effective delivery of the program and ensuring that only those people who the people of Ontario, through their elected representatives, deem eligible for social assistance are receiving it, the benefits will be fantastic. There will be

more money available to provide services for those most vulnerable in the province, whether it be a young child with autism or whether it be an adult with a disability.

**Mr Maves:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Hello, Minister. Good to have you here.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Thank you.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, statements were being made in the House today on violence against women, and this is an issue that has captured my attention for many years.

You probably are not aware of it, but five years ago I got involved in putting together a report for the then minister of women's issues, the Honourable Dianne Cunningham. In Kitchener we had a committee of many people looking at this. We had a doctor at St Mary's hospital, a psychologist at St Mary's hospital, we had a nurse, we a police officer, we had the executive director of the multicultural community, we had a couple of victims—there were about 11 or 12 people in total. When we started out, we didn't know how far it was going to go. We actually expanded the report to include spousal abuse, not just against women but some against men, because there are a few cases of that. Over the course of the 11 or 12 months that it took to complete the study, while we found that there were a couple of instances in which the women had not been abused like they said they were but were counselled to say they were—there were only a couple. There were a great many women who had been abused, some seriously. Unfortunately, a sizable percentage of them were in the ethnocultural community. We made some recommendations and the minister adopted some of them in her report.

1720

In Kitchener, we have a counselling centre. While it's called the Catholic Family Counselling Centre, it is a non-denominational professional counselling agency. You, through your ministry, gave them a capital grant this year of \$150,000 in order to build new facilities. The centre offers a variety of services to children, adults and families, not just within Kitchener but the entire region of Waterloo. They do receive funding from your ministry for services related to violence-against-women programming.

They've been helping children in the region since 1952, so for almost 50 years. In 1999, the agency provided individual, marital, family and group therapy or treatment services to over 8,000 community members. In so far as violence against women is concerned, it provides counselling, it provides education as well as groups for men, women and children who have experienced childhood sexual abuse.

It has an annual operating budget of \$1.5 million. Its diversified funding base includes the United Way, your ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Solicitor General, correctional services, as well as the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton and miscellaneous other revenue sources. Your ministry provides \$125,000 in ongoing operating subsidy for this centre.



The new facility that has just been completed and just opened will increase their total space from about 4,700-and-change square feet to 18,000 square feet. The counselling offices will increase from 11 to 28 and of course they now have parking for 61 spaces; previously they only had parking for 20. They'll have one large group room, three small group rooms and they added volunteer and student work areas. They have accessibility now to include the handicapped, for wheelchairs.

I want to say that I think you have exhibited a great deal of foresight in granting funding, both from the operational standpoint and also from the capital standpoint, for this agency. I say all this because I have a great deal of interest in the agency. I used to serve on the board of directors, but of course I had to resign when I got elected because I, of course, want to lobby on their behalf for more money. You're not allowed to do that if you're a member of the board.

I do want to comment that this issue is prominent not just here, not just in my riding of Kitchener, but it's a prominent issue throughout Ontario. I abhor violence against women; I cannot tolerate it. I've noticed that you've increased the funding this year, according to the estimates on page 73, from \$70.5 million to \$81.6 million, an increase of 15.7%. I think everyone on the committee will agree that this money is very important, but I was wondering if you could tell me how the money will be used.

**Hon Mr Baird:** This initiative was announced as part of the budget. It was one that the ministry put forward in the pre-budget exercise to address two separate issues, but obviously it shared the same fundamental concern; the root cause was the same. One was \$5 million to provide more support for transitional supports to women who are in shelters and who need supports to transition themselves back into life in the community. This support will give about \$50,000 to many agencies, or one worker—to many agencies, depending on the size; there may be a small variance—to provide additional supports to help women get their lives and the lives of their families back on track after they've escaped violence. It's one in which I didn't need to be convinced that more could be done, and certainly our colleagues strongly supported the issue.

The second one was with respect to the children who are victims of violence and/or the witnesses of violence, in many cases both. In the Legislature earlier today, our colleague Helen Johns, the minister responsible for women's issues, spoke of the terrible tragedies of children who are the witnesses to this violence and the effect it can have not just in the short term, but even in more disturbing terms in the long term. I think of the examples that she gave of young boys growing up to be men and somehow believing that it's acceptable behaviour to engage in domestic abuse, as almost something they learned at home; or conversely, a young girl getting any sort of indication or receiving any sort of message that this is normal or acceptable.

If we can do more to address those issues at the early stages I think it'll be an incredibly important investment

to stop what too often has been and is and continues to be a cycle of violence. So those two initiatives were included in the budget. Over the summer we took the time to meet with women's organizations, including the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the second-stage representatives and a good number of representatives of women's groups from around the province, in two separate consultations, to get their advice, to get their thoughts, to get their suggestions and to be mindful of that in the development of both programs.

It's a good initiative. It brings to a record amount the support and funding that we provide toward domestic violence in the ministry, which I'm proud of. It's more than \$10 million, more than was provided even five or six years ago. It demonstrates the commitment that we bring to this issue.

I don't think anyone though suggests for a moment that what we're doing alone in the ministry is enough. We can do more within our own ministry, as a government, as a society, as governments at all levels. One of the challenges is balancing off prevention, dealing with the victims, supports and services, dealing with crises, dealing with the health challenge, dealing with the legal challenge in terms of our colleague the Attorney General in terms of the domestic violence courts, the legal response, the development of attitudes in the community which clearly demonstrate that this type of behaviour is not acceptable and it's criminal and it'll be treated as such.

Too often over the past 25, 35 or 50 years this has been a problem which people don't want to discuss, they don't want to talk about. It's one in which often governments and communities and people in communities have turned their back and not paid as much attention as they should. Changing attitudes are incredibly important in our society on this issue.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We had a report distributed to us in the Legislature today indicating that 43 women had died as a result of spousal abuse or general violence against women since the May-Iles report. I was just wondering if you have any numbers as to whether this has been a dramatic increase, or is it a decrease? If you don't have those numbers, it's all right. It's just something that I'm wondering.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't have the specific numbers in terms of the rates, the ultimate victimization I guess, of someone dying. I can say that one of the concerns we have in this area is how much domestic violence goes on in communities around the province that we don't know about, that isn't reported to police. It isn't reported, it doesn't show up on the radar screen. That's something that causes us all concern. It's much the same, for example, when we talk about child abuse or rates for children's aid societies; the children coming into care have increased by 40%. We don't know if that's because there are 40% more children being abused or whether, through more resources and through more powerful laws and procedures, we are able to catch it. But it is obviously a growing concern not just for the government and for



me and our ministry, but it's a growing concern for people in our communities, right across the province, that more can and has to be done in this area.

1730

**Mr Wettlaufer:** One of the things that came up during the study that we did five years ago, both in consultation with the crown attorney's office as well as with the police officer on the committee, was that as more and more people were becoming educated on this issue and realizing that there was less tolerance for it, there were, in fact, more reported cases than before and they felt that it wasn't as a result of there being an increased incidence of it, just more education. So you could be right on that one.

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** Mr Minister, I wondered what performance standards you have for service to the ODSP clients.

**Hon Mr Baird:** In terms of their entry into the system, we have a number. It's not an easy process in terms of an individual getting the assessment they need to determine and validate a disability.

We have set, in terms of the performance measure, in terms of the adjudication, six to eight weeks. It's one with which I was concerned when I was first elected; the former program was taking as much as two years. Our standard is to realize it within six to eight weeks. It's one, with new cases, we are meeting now, which is good. But we have been looking at, two years into the program, what reforms we can bring in to help provide better service in terms of whether it's a medical form that the doctor has to fill out—the doctor has to fill it out so that it's clear, so we can get better advice and better information to assist that process. I think we've got to do more. I think we've got to get more resources on the Social Benefits Tribunal. The huge number of cases that have come forward—the applications have been much more significant through the disability adjudication unit—have been much greater than anyone would have anticipated. So we're looking at more resources and more members for that to ensure that we can get the length of time it takes for someone to get an appeal reduced, because I'm not satisfied with it. I think we've got to do a lot better job and that's something that has our attention.

**Mr Wood:** What about performance standards? How long does it take to answer the phone when you phone? Do you have any standards like that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes, the OPS has standards like that and I would refer to our deputy.

**Mr John Fleming:** There are standards on that. I can't recall them precisely at this moment, but they have to do with the number of rings by which, on average, telephones are answered. But in addition to that, given the modern world of voicemail, there are also standards set across the Ontario Public Service for how quickly voicemail messages are returned by the person for whom they are left. In addition, where people encounter voicemail and wish to speak to a live person and press zero to be transferred, there are government-wide standards as to how many times such calls can be transferred. In other

words, we have standards that avoid people being trapped in what's commonly called "voicemail jail" so that if you desire to get out of voicemail, you can in, I believe, one step or two reach a living person. Those are the standards that apply across the Ontario Public Service.

**Mr Wood:** We've heard the standard bandied about that you have an answer within three rings and you're not referred more than once. Does that seem a reasonable standard for this ministry?

**Mr Fleming:** I believe it's a reasonable standard. I believe it's a similar level of standard that would apply in most private business operations.

**Hon Mr Baird:** With the Ontario disability support program and the 1-800 number, there were substantial concerns raised by some members of the Legislature on this issue. Before question period every day for about a month, I would make three calls to test how quickly they would respond. I was getting pretty good success. I stopped getting the question, so—

**Mr Wood:** What's the time period that elapses from the time of an application to the Social Benefits Tribunal until an appeal is finally dealt with?

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** They didn't believe me when I told them the minister was calling. They didn't believe me.

**Mr Wood:** Minister, did you hear the question?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No; I apologize.

**Mr Wood:** What's the timeline that elapses, on average, between the lodging of an appeal to the Social Benefits Tribunal and the final disposition of that appeal? What's the average time that's taken?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think it would be up to six months.

**Mr Wood:** Do you find that an acceptable time period?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No; it's completely unacceptable. I'm not prepared to defend it. I think we've got to do a much better job than that. We're prepared to put more resources into the tribunal. The chair made that case, and I'm one who did not have to be convinced. I think, as well, we've got to have more members on the tribunal to be able to make those determinations on a more timely basis.

I'm not prepared to defend it; I think we've got to do a better job. That's one of which I don't need to be convinced, and one that has our active attention.

**Mr Wood:** What do you see as a reasonable time period, on average?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think, on appeal, two or three months would be a good benchmark for us to go to at the outset. A lot of it has to do with the factors that lead to the appeal in the first place, not just how we deal with the appeals once they've taken place. That's why with the medical evaluations we want to work with physicians and others who can make these determinations to make sure it's crystal clear, that it's as simple as possible for them to make accurate assessments that will support a case.

**Mr Wood:** What mechanisms do you have in place to determine whether or not your performance standards are being met?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Within the disability adjudication unit or the SARB?

**Mr Wood:** Both.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Both?

**Mr Wood:** I'm sorry to ask all these tough questions. The opposition questions were so easy, I thought I'd better be a little tougher on you.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I followed Mr Wood as the parliamentary assistant to the Chair of Management Board, where we worked on performance measures.

**Ms Hill:** We monitor, through the provincial services branch, which manages the disability adjudication unit, all of the performance standards, including the volume of mail, how quickly we respond, phone calls, the length of time to adjudicate, which is currently at seven weeks. All of that data is managed in the provincial services branch.

In the management support branch in the ministry, we monitor other performance standards in our programs: whether we're implementing in a timely manner and whether we're meeting the standards we've set for the program. Then we take corrective action through our regional offices.

**Mr Wood:** What steps are you taking as a ministry to reduce red tape within your ministry?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We work very closely with the Red Tape Commission.

**Mr Wood:** That is a very wise first step. Perhaps you could share with us the other steps you're taking in that area. What sort of advice are you getting from the commission, and what follow-up are you doing on it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Always good advice. I think we can constantly look at our processes in terms of our delivery of services. One of the things we've done, for example—I'll talk about services for children. We've tried to take a more integrated approach in the delivery of services to children, and we've tried to stop parents from having to sit down and tell their story four, five and six times. They can go in and tell their story once.

The example of that would be through the Making Services Work for People initiative, where we've tried to have central assessment and provide better services. There could be a tremendous challenge for a family having to go through all the hoops for a child with a multiple or dual diagnosis. So integrated services for children, our Making Services Work for People initiative and developmental services—I think we've come a long way. We've got a lot of new agencies around the province that are starting out to help make that early assessment. In Brantford we have Contact Brant, which just opened recently. In Niagara region we have Contact Niagara, which just opened up recently.

Those are a few examples of where we're trying to reduce the type of hoops that parents have had to go through in the past in terms of getting services for their children.

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**Mr Wood:** Do you have an overall plan to try to reduce red tape in the ministry?

**Hon Mr Baird:** An overall plan, centrally? No.

**Mr Wood:** Do you think—

**The Chair:** Mr Wood, I'm sorry; your time has expired. However, the minister may be able to oblige you because we now turn to the minister's response time. The minister has 30 minutes to respond to the concerns raised by the various members of the committee.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair.

To finish the point, within government there has to be a willingness to evaluate and hold yourself to a higher standard in the delivery of service to those we are there to serve and the taxpayers who pay the freight. A big example of that is the business transformation project, where we're trying to make it a streamlined system that gets help to people who need it in the most efficient way possible—serves them, and the taxpayers who pay the freight, well. I think we're going to be able to save, administratively, up to \$200 million a year once the project is fully completed and realized and provide better services to the public in a more efficient way. Using technology is extremely important to that. I think we can do a better job. The business transformation project is one example.

You can also look at a number of other social policy areas. When we look at the provision of children's mental health services, how can we use new communication technologies to better provide supports to young children with a mental health problem in northern Ontario or in rural Ontario? I attended the Children's Mental Health Ontario convention in Sudbury in September, and I got a lot of positive feedback on the telepsychiatry initiative the ministry has taken as one of the initiatives which is part of the \$20 million in expansion of children's mental health funding. Through telecommunication links, a service provider in rural Ontario could make contact with the Hospital for Sick Children and go to an expert in terms of a child's particular diagnosis and be able to get supports for that child. It's an area where I think we can expand service and do a better job and do it cost-effectively.

Our challenge as a ministry is to constantly look at those standards, both in terms of service to the people we work for and the taxpayers who pay the freight. There's always room for improvement; if anyone suggested there isn't, that should probably be treated with some skepticism.

I wanted to finish my comments in terms of talking about developmental disabilities and developmental services. The employment supports area of the ministry, through the Ontario disability support program, has been an area where we've doubled funding in terms of the budget line and are expanding that, over the last couple of years and over the next year or two, to try to provide more employment supports to people with disabilities. This is something we're proud of.

In addition, with respect to funding, retrofits for group homes and changes to the fire code brought in by the Ontario Fire Marshal has been an area where we've provided \$7 million in new funding this year to be able to help our transfer partner agencies around the province to be able to meet those new standards.



This is a personal concern of mine, in terms of having to strike a balance between the safety of the residents of a group home and, at the same time, balancing off that it is a community living centre. We're all troubled by the thought that—at some point, I fear that the fire marshal is going to say, "We have to have fluorescent orange backlit exit signs in residents' bedrooms." That's not community living. We've got to be very mindful that we don't re-institutionalize people when they move into the community. That has been an area which has caused me and a good number of others in that sector concern, so it's one that we're working on.

The government has been there to provide additional resources to help agencies around the province deal with this challenge, which is through no fault of management and is not through service volumes; it's just new regulation which, in some cases, is very well justified and meaningful. But we are mindful of that and are watching it very closely, because we don't want to see the re-institutionalization and the erosion of what community living is.

Labour issues are of concern within the developmental services sector. This is a sector with some agencies having a particularly high turnover among their staff. I have met, on a number of occasions, with representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and heard this concern. I've heard it from the agencies themselves, the boards of directors and the agency heads. For the first time in almost 10 years, we provided an increase for staffing of \$6 million, rising to \$15 million next year. That's a very small amount, but it's a recognition that we acknowledge this is a challenge and it is a concern. Some of the agencies have turnovers of as much as 40% and the strong economy is making it a real challenge to be able to recruit and retain qualified staff.

This is not an easy job in the developmental services sector. On a partisan level we may have debates in terms of the compensation of folks in the public sector, but this is not an area with which anyone gets involved for the money. For the people who work in the developmental services sector on the ground in our agencies and in the ministry in terms of the provision of direct, front-line services, it's more a vocation than it is a job and it's certainly a labour of love for many of the folks who work in that area. That's something we're mindful of. We did put new money on the table this year, growing to \$15 million next year. I don't think anyone would suggest that solves the problem but I think it's a tangible example where the ministry has recognized that it is a real concern.

Respite care is something that I strongly believe in and support, and not just for people with a developmental disability or with a disability in general, whether they be an adult or a child. It is particularly important to them and to their families. We announced \$17 million last year and began to roll that out: \$7 million for in-home respite care for children with a disability who are medically fragile or technologically dependent, and we were able to further announce at the Ottawa-Carleton children's treatment centre earlier this fall \$10 million for out-of-home

respite care. This, in a budget of \$7.5 billion, seems relatively modest, but it is absolutely astonishing when you see the benefits it can have to families in terms of their ability to cope. I don't think any one of us knows how we would deal with the challenge of having a family member, a loved one, who required such a high level of care. We certainly want to do more to support families in providing that love and care to their family members, in this case to children. Respite care is obviously something where I think we get a tremendous bang for our buck in terms of support that makes it easier for people to cope.

One area where we've begun to consult, particularly in terms of reforming our developmental services sector, is the future of the three institutions. The ministry has three remaining institutions: in Cedar Springs just outside of Blenheim in southwestern Ontario; just outside of Smiths Falls at the Rideau Regional Centre adjacent to my constituency; and just north of Toronto, in Orillia, we have the Huronia Regional Centre. These are the last three institutions that remain for people with a developmental disability in the province of Ontario.

The last five governments, representing three political parties, have strongly supported moving to community living. The ministry had a community living expansion strategy that expired this past March where we were able to move a significant number of people into community living environments. Certainly the reports I've heard to date are that it has been quite successful.

There has been a lot of concern and maybe misunderstanding in some quarters. The experience maybe in the 1960s and 1970s with psychiatric patients in community living certainly gave a lot of concern and perhaps could have been done better. The ministry goes to great lengths to work with individuals and their families on providing the link, the support, for moving from an institution into the community. It's one area on which we're starting to consult over the past month or two to get people's ideas and views and suggestions on what we should do with the remaining three institutions in the province. Obviously, we strongly support community living. We're not admitting any new residents into these three facilities. We're looking at what the future will be for those three institutions, for the individuals and their families and also importantly for the staff members who work there.

We do have a challenge, being the last three institutions, that many of the residents there are particularly challenged. There are a lot who have high needs, whether they be behavioural or in terms of a medical need, often with a dual diagnosis. We've got to be mindful of that consideration when we move. But just about all the research that has been done at the ministry, through the University of Toronto a number of years back, which I have had the chance to review, virtually all of the advocates and all the people who work in the sector suggest that there is a substantially higher quality of life for individuals when they live in the community.

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There is a significant amount of apprehension among some of the families whose individuals continue to remain in the institutions. We try to be mindful of that



fear and that concern they express and we'll certainly take the time to reflect on that in the future. That is something on which we're beginning to consult. I have had discussions with colleagues in the government caucus and with Mr Gravelle and Ms Churley in the Liberal and New Democratic parties. I'm getting their ideas and suggestions because I certainly believe it's a non-partisan issue. It's one of the few issues I can look at in any area of government that has survived the last four or five governments. All parties have strongly supported community living, provided obviously that supports are there in the community. Community living can't take place and shouldn't take place unless there are enough supports there in the community to accommodate that, and that's something we're looking at.

I'm very pleased with the relationship we've been able to build with the developmental services sector. It's one that has been strained under all governments, but we have a tremendously positive working relationship with our transfer partner agencies around the province, whether they be providing residential supports or other supports to people with a developmental disability. The ministry, through our nine regional offices, has good and improving relations with this sector.

We'd like to begin to look at what sort of plan we can develop for the future in terms of providing services for people with developmental disabilities, of supporting community living and ensuring that the right mix of supports are there, being mindful of the needs of aging parents, of young adults leaving the school system, and then the supports to families whether they be through respite care or through other community supports; as well, employment supports. Many individuals with a developmental disability can work, and there's an area where government can't do it all alone. There have been a number of corporations which have done a good job in terms of providing employment opportunities for individuals with a developmental disability across the province. That's been the feedback I've heard from this sector: what can we as a government do to reach out to the corporate sector and reach out to non-profit agencies around the province, to look at what sort of responsibilities we all collectively have to provide a place for every member of our society, in this case people with a developmental disability, people who are our friends, our neighbours and our family members?

That's an area in terms of developmental services reform. We increased funding this year by \$50 million, bringing it to approximately \$965 million. That's a record in the province of Ontario and that builds on the \$35-million increase last year announced by my predecessor, the Honourable Janet Ecker. This is an area in which we believe there's a strong role for government to play. We may have differences of opinion depending on our ideological and political persuasion about the role of government, but certainly in this area there's a strong role for government to play in helping to provide supports for some of the most vulnerable people in the province. That's one we embrace and recognize as an important responsibility.

I am mindful as well in terms of the power of this sector. The business community or the teachers' unions have a terrific amount of power to be able to contribute to political debate. This is not a sector which has enjoyed that type of power. I think those of us in government, whether in the legislative or the executive branch, have got to be mindful of that in terms of compensating for that. That voice may not be the loudest at times but it's every bit as important. That's one which I take very personally in terms of supporting people with a developmental disability and policy toward that.

The biggest area within the ministry is the social assistance branch and the provision and delivery of welfare and supports through the Ontario disability support program. We had a bit of a discussion about that earlier on. We're very proud of the Ontario disability support program. We think it's been a big success. There is a lot of room for improvement, as there is with every government program, particularly coming out of the first two years. But it has been a good program, it is a good program, and we're tremendously proud. I believe the staff have done a fantastic job in the development of the program and working with the disabled community and advocates in that sector, people with experience in developing the program and in terms of managing the rollout of it. The reform is not complete. There is still more we can do in employment supports and more we can do in ensuring there is good customer service. But for a program that is two and a half years old, I think the staff in the ministry can take great pride in the effective delivery of the program and be mindful that there is always more we can do in this area.

The same is the case in Ontario Works. This is a top priority of the government in terms of reforming our welfare system. Five years ago our welfare system was letting a lot of good people down. In my travels around the province this past summer I took the opportunity to visit 17 of our consolidated municipal service managers, 17 municipalities which are delivering welfare. In each of the 17, I tried to take the opportunity to meet with the county warden or the councillors who work on the committee, who deal with it, the senior management team, and to take time to talk to the caseworkers on the ground who are delivering the program. I found wherever I went a lot of support; not unanimous support, but a lot of support for the programs they were able to provide, good supports, and I've provided a number of examples.

I visited Parry Sound and one caseworker told me how she's seen first-hand the difference this program has been able to provide to the people who are down on their luck and need a hand up. That's been incredibly positive.

One of the fundamental premises of the program is that you've got to do something in exchange for your welfare cheque. If you have a mandatory requirement, you are required to do something in exchange for that cheque. We exempt single parents with preschool-aged children, we exempt a small number of seniors who are on the caseload, and people can get a temporary deferment if they have an extenuating circumstance, whether it's a short-term medical problem, a bereavement or some

other issue. But for those with mandatory requirements, there is the view that you've got to be involved in one or more of the activities under Ontario's workfare program. That can involve everything from taking part in employment support.

I visited Kitchener-Waterloo and they have a six-week program they operate to get people ready to look for a job, to interview for a job, to get the job and, most important, to keep the job. So there are some who will have to participate in a program like that. They have to take a basic education initiative, which might be English as a second language, doing a high school equivalency, taking some job skills, whether it's learning how to drive a forklift, getting some other specialized training, which is generally in the short term, or taking a community placement where people can get on-the-job experience.

That's been a particular success. Last year we had just over 30,000 people involved in community placement under Ontario Works, which is the workfare placement in

the public sector. This has been a program which I was an early supporter of, and I appreciated the value of someone getting some experience, getting something they could put on their next job application, getting that all-important job reference.

I talked to one participant in Goderich who told me she was a single mother, a stay-at-home mom for a number of years and now has been out of the workforce for 15 years. She said the most daunting problem she had whenever she got a job application form was, "Recent experience, nil; references, nil." That is something we're very mindful of.

**The Chair:** I'm just checking to see if we have a vote. I think it's simply the House recessing. So we are also adjourned. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, committee members.

*The committee adjourned at 1758.*





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Ms Susan Sourial

#### **Staff / Personnel**

Ms Anne Marzalik, research officer,  
Research and Information Services



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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 14 November 2000

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 14 novembre 2000

## Standing committee on estimates

Ministry of Community  
and Social Services

## Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Ministère des Services sociaux  
et communautaires



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 14 November 2000

Mardi 14 novembre 2000

*The committee met at 1534 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** Could we start the estimates. When we adjourned the last time, Minister, you had about 12 minutes left on your rebuttal. After that, we will do the rotation of 20 minutes, starting with the official opposition. Are you ready, Minister?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Yes. Thank you ver much, Mr Chair. Just in terms of the response, I was continuing to discuss initiatives and policy responsibilities within the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Today I thought I would talk a little bit about Ontario Works, which is obviously one of the most important programs the ministry offers. It's one of the two largest programs, together with the Ontario disability support program. We provide a whole series of supports under the Ontario Works program to help people realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with independence.

There's a whole series of employment supports that are offered under the Ontario Works program designed to give people the tools and supports they need to be in a position to look for a job, to be in a position to obtain employment and, probably most important, to be successful and to maintain that employment in the future.

We provide just over \$40 million to support child care, Ontario Works child care, specifically designed for the Ontario Works program, although parents can access a good number of other supports within our child care system. It's interesting to note that it increased in the 1998-99 year, and with the welfare caseload declines, which have been unprecedented, we have the same amount of money to support a smaller number of cases. So the dollar-caseload ratio has certainly come down, which means we're able to provide services to a higher percentage of the caseload than it otherwise might have been in the past.

What we want to ensure, though, is that Ontario Works child care support goes to people who need it, and I will use an example, if I could. If someone is taking a two-days-a-week course, training or job skills, we're not going to be offering five-days-a-week child care, 40-

hours-a-week child care, if they just need it for those two days. We've implemented measures to ensure that those resources are used wisely and well and as effectively as possible.

We also have supports ranging from basic education—someone wanting to get a high school equivalency. This can be particularly important for people with English as a second language. In your home community of Toronto or in mine of Ottawa-Carleton, that is an important support. Job skills training: someone could, for example, get the skills and the certificate necessary to drive a forklift. Things of that nature are obviously important.

We also have a number of other initiatives. One of the centrepieces has been placements, Ontario Works placements, be they in the public sector as community placements or in the private sector as employment placements. Community placements and employment placements are a particular priority for me. One of the things I've learned as I've travelled around the province is that it's awfully difficult for someone to get a job—and it was pointed out to me probably most vividly by a participant I had the opportunity to meet and speak with in Goderich, Ontario. She had accepted a placement at a local non-profit agency. She told me how difficult it was to look for a job. I said, "Can you give me an example? Explain this to me." She said that every time she got a job application, the first question after her name was "recent experience," and this woman hadn't been in the labour force for 15 years. She was a stay-at-home mom, had become a single parent and had been disconnected from the labour force for some time. She hadn't participated in the labour force for 15 years and didn't have any recent experience, which was a huge barrier for her. Of course, with that, she didn't have any recent references. She said to me that she had references but, 15 years after the fact, they had all died. So it can be incredibly important to someone to get some experience and to get that all-important reference for their next job application. Whether it's a part-time job or a full-time job, that's particularly important.

One thing I perhaps didn't appreciate 18 months ago when I first came to the ministry was the bigger effects; most directly I would say self-esteem. Being in economically trying circumstances, someone can question their self-worth and their value and whether they can compete in the labour market and in our society. Self-esteem and self-confidence are huge barriers that Ontario Works case

workers in communities right across the province have identified to me as substantial problems. A placement is obviously where someone can get some skills and experience.

In my own office we've had six or seven placements, and in the overwhelming number of cases it's been a very positive experience. We've felt in the office that we've been able to provide an opportunity for someone, to give them some skills and some experience. You can see the self-esteem, and you realize that if someone has been out of the labour force or hasn't participated in it at all, basic skills that you learn in your first job—showing up for work on time etc—are important skills that people can learn. I've seen a huge difference in people as their time expires. Again, I think the overwhelming majority of the folks we've had in our office have been able to move into paid employment, in some cases at first part-time and then moving to full-time employment. So they're particularly important.

1540

We do have an Ontario Works placement capacity in the private sector through employment placements. That's basically the same type of thing with obviously a different set of rules and regulations in terms of someone's participation in that as it's in the for-profit sector.

There is a range of other supports that we provide in Ontario Works, whether they be a back-to-school clothing allowance for parents to provide for their children; there is a whole host of tax credits which are offered above and beyond the basic welfare cheque in terms of basic dental coverage and emergency coverage for children particularly, which is important.

We also have two initiatives: the earn-back initiative and the STEP initiative. The STEP initiative existed under the previous government and has been modified to some extent. What it does is allow people on welfare to keep a percentage of their earnings, which is an encouragement, an incentive for someone to get a part-time job. Most people I've talked to at some point in their lives started work, started in the labour force, with a part-time job, and that can be an incredibly important confidence builder and can get some experience for someone, as well as helping them supplement their welfare cheque. That program existed before. It's been modified somewhat by the government.

There is another initiative that we implemented back in October 1995, what I call the earn-back program, where someone on social assistance can earn back the difference between the new rate and the old rate. As you recall, welfare rates were realigned by 21.6% in October 1995, and that was announced I believe on July 16 or July 23, 1995. That initiative has been a pretty big success. I think people would be surprised to learn that in excess of 25% of the caseload, about 60,000 participants in Ontario Works, have a part-time job and are earning a part-time cheque to help supplement their welfare cheque. This is an important support that allows them the ability to move from welfare to work and that I believe

has been one of the contributing factors to the success of the program. Those are some of the supports we provide under Ontario Works.

The Ontario disability support program is really the companion sister program to Ontario Works in terms of the social assistance sphere. It's an income support program for people with disabilities. It's a new program. It has received accolades, and at times perhaps a few justified growing pains, but it's a program with which we're particularly pleased. It has gotten a lot of good feedback and, in addition, feedback where there's room for improvement. But it is more a long-term program whereas welfare is a short-term program of last resort. It's not meant to be a way of life, whereas the Ontario disability support program is envisaged to provide more perhaps long-term supports.

We've gotten rid of the label "permanently unemployable," which is something that just about everyone in the disability community found offensive, and tried to provide supports. What we want to do there is to give people the confidence, which will build over time, I believe, that they can take a job and go off the system and have the ability to get back on in very short order. That's something important. Particularly people who suffer from a mental illness or a psychiatric condition need to have that ability to go into work and to come off work. We're in the course of doubling the employment supports budget on the program to provide more supports to people with disabilities, whether it be a developmental disability or a physical disability, through a whole host of our partners.

That's a quick summary of the Ontario disability support program. It's a new program. We're particularly pleased. We think it's a good program and we'll continue to work to improve it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Minister. Now we will start the rotation. Mr Gravelle, 20 minutes.

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** If I may, Minister, I would like to actually ask you a question related to the mandatory drug testing program that you announced this morning. I don't think you answered my questions directly this afternoon in the House, so I thought I'd give you an opportunity to do so.

As you know, the human rights commissioner, Mr Norton, has ruled that there can be no discrimination based on people having addictions. In fact, I think that's a very important point in terms of your plan to move forward. How do you respond to that? Do you not think that every Ontarian has a right to protection under the Ontario Human Rights Code?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Obviously, in the design of the initiative what we did announce wasn't the program, as you stated, but our intention to go out and consult publicly, as we have committed to do, over the next four to six weeks on the development of the program. We have a commitment that we'll honour to implement a mandatory drug treatment program for those on welfare who are addicted to drugs.

One of the challenges we'll have, as we've had with just about all of our welfare reforms, is to deal with the



legal consequences of that. Just about all of our welfare reforms have been challenged at one point or another in the courts, and I suspect this will be no different. The Ontario human rights commissioner, as you mentioned, has expressed some concern about the concept. Of course he hasn't seen the policy, because it hasn't been developed. I communicated with him when he initially wrote us last year and I spoke with him this week and indicated not just our willingness but our desire to work with him and certainly to attempt to address his concerns and the concerns of his commission or his staff in the development of the initiative. That follows as part of his mandate.

**Mr Gravelle:** How do you see that working? The commissioner wrote this new directive in terms of a legal ruling that came in place, and how do you see it working? You cannot discriminate based on people's addictions. Therefore, by obviously imposing mandatory drug testing, which is indeed your intention—you're not hiding that fact—how can you do that when it's clear that this would be something where you would be treating certain citizens in our province ultimately differently than other citizens? In other words, are you saying they shouldn't have the same protections?

**Hon Mr Baird:** To be fair, I think the commissioner in his letter to me on this issue has used words like "it appears" and "it may." We haven't developed the policy yet. We'll be working with him in the development of the policy, and we'll see where it goes.

If we had put up our hands and surrendered every time someone threatened court action, we wouldn't have accomplished all that we have accomplished in welfare reform. We aren't just willing but are open and want to work with him and his office in the development of the program. That's why we've committed to consult and that's why we want to consult, and frankly that's why we need to consult, to make sure we develop a good program. But I'll be the first to admit there's no guarantee that we'll satisfy his thoughts.

**Mr Gravelle:** Are you prepared to incur legal costs? This is obviously an issue that could also go to court, as it has in other jurisdictions. Obviously there have been legal decisions made. I cited the case in Michigan specifically this afternoon.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No. With the case in Michigan, which will be ruled on later this month, if I'm not mistaken, it was about two or two and a half months after the policy was implemented that the courts intervened. I think that was a universal chemical screening, which is not something that we're considering.

**Mr Gravelle:** Is it not fair to say, though, that if you were truly serious about helping people who have addictions and have drug-induced problems, that you would be prepared to fund properly the agencies that are there to help people deal with this problem? Certainly when I talked to a couple of organizations today after your announcement, it was made clear that a lot of the addiction treatment centres have not received an increase in their base funding, some over the last six years, some

over the last 10 years. They do not have the resources to deal with the people who are coming forward voluntarily. They do that. It strikes me, and perhaps this is where we will differ, that providing that kind of funding, let alone providing enough appropriate child care, employment supports and cost-of-living adjustments, those are the areas where you might be able to help people.

**Hon Mr Baird:** One of the challenges in the health care budget has been that just seven years ago the federal government was paying 18 cents on the dollar for health care. That was the Brian Mulroney way: 18 cents on the dollar with a \$40-billion deficit. We now have a \$20-billion surplus and Jean Chrétien is giving I think 10 cents on the dollar, and after this health accord it will be 12 or 13 cents on the dollar. If Mr Chrétien would show the same commitment to health care that Brian Mulroney did, that would obviously be a good start in terms of addressing capacity issues under the existing mandate.

I'm under no illusions that there will be new funds and additional resources required to support treatment. I think the Ministry of Health spends in the order of \$96 million on 160 agencies. I don't know whether I'd want to commit that we'd use those 160 agencies. They obviously have a lot of expertise there. We'll want to get some advice on some of that and that obviously may be one of the vehicles which we explore, but if someone says, "You can't make this work without more support for treatment," I agree.

1550

**Mr Gravelle:** How many people on social assistance have a drug abuse problem?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's difficult, I suppose, in dealing with any black market economy issue. People don't readily acknowledge their participation in the black market. You can't do a survey or run a computer check on whether someone purchases narcotics, whether someone is buying or consuming heroin. They don't normally readily admit to it. The best estimates we've been able to gather are it's between 3% and 10% of the caseload. For a lot of people, if they've lost their job because of a drug addiction, welfare is their last step.

One of the really scary challenges in this whole process is that if someone is addicted, for example, to heroin, which was one of the examples cited to me earlier today, that habit could be costing them between \$100 and \$800 a day according to the Metro Toronto drug squad, which I had an opportunity to meet with. Someone is having to seek supplementary sources of revenue to help feed that habit. In some cases, the welfare cheque could be as little as 5% or 10% of the income.

**Mr Gravelle:** You're focusing on such a very small percentage of people with problems. As I pointed out, the general population has these same problems. It strikes me you should feel at least a little bit badly about the fact that you could leave the impression that there's a large number of people out there and that it's rampant. The fact is, and I'm sure your people will back it up and I'm sure you know this, Minister, the vast majority of people who have drug abuse problems have alcohol abuse problems.



That's the vast majority and any addiction treatment centre will know that. By focusing on the very small minority, it strikes me that what you're doing is trying to perpetrate a myth that it's a much larger problem than it is. I think that is part of the politics of what's happening here, that you're getting tough on a situation when what is needed is more assistance.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'd be pleased to have a political discussion with you on that initiative. Mr McGuinty was very clear during last year's election campaign. He did not come out against this policy. I can give you two quotes where they said either that they support it or the Liberal Party supports half of it. If you want to have a political discussion, we can have that. If Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party came out with a clear policy and were consistent on it, you might be better armed to have that debate, that discussion.

I can appreciate that reasonable people will disagree, but in the marketplace of ideas, as elected officials and politicians, we come up with policies, present them to the electorate, have a debate about that, and certainly Mr McGuinty's views on this issue were clear before the vote, and they're changing that now.

**Mr Gravelle:** We are having that debate now. The truth is that we obviously think there are ways you can be far more supportive in helping people in this situation rather than a mandatory drug program, which truly—I heard a reporter ask you a question: "What do you say to somebody who's a 25-year-old single mother and is being told she needs to get tested for drugs before she can receive any assistance, and she's in a desperate situation?" I think we can all be asked that question. The truth is we just think there's a way to do it that's actually a lot more productive than basically setting up this mandatory drug testing, which may indeed be illegal, which clearly at this stage appears to be contravening the Human Rights Code.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll take you up on your offer. If you've got other ideas or suggestions on how we can better help that 25-year-old single mother of a child who's a heroin addict, if you've got other ideas—

**Mr Gravelle:** No, I am talking about a woman who is not a drug abuser at all, but is being told she must take this test or she won't receive funding. That's what I'm talking about—

**Hon Mr Baird:** We haven't designed the program—

**Mr Gravelle:** —and that's what you're setting up. You're setting up a scenario where you have a person who's in a difficult situation, and what do you do? You tell them they have to take a test to see if they're on drugs before you give them money, any assistance at all. That is the scenario you're setting up as of this morning and I think that's pretty alarming.

If we can move on, I asked you last time, Minister, about the salaries and wages at your office, your political staff, and they have gone up by about 25% higher than last year. Can you tell me more specifically what the staff increases have been? You explained them in a rather brief fashion. I'm just curious about that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I have some—just give me one moment.

**Mr Gravelle:** You can table it later if you wish.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I will get the information for you, and perhaps I could discuss it tomorrow.

**Mr Gravelle:** It just does bring to mind—as far as I'm concerned, it seems to me that you are basically saying one thing and doing the other by ultimately increasing the costs in your office but not even considering the possibility of a cost-of-living adjustment for people. It bothers me enormously.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think there was an issue with what was spent in previous years and has it gone up by 25%. We will get you that information, and we can have that discussion tomorrow. I apologize. I thought I had it, but it is not the information I requested.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me move on to the Social Benefits Tribunal. During the last session we had before the break, you responded to a question from a government member about the lengthy wait for cases being heard at the Social Benefits Tribunal. I think you said you were going to put more resources into the tribunal to bring the waiting list down to three months.

The estimates on page 3 show that you've cut the resources to the Social Benefits Tribunal. You chopped it by \$1.7 million in 2000-01. That seems to conflict with what you said at the session a week or so ago.

Why would you cut resources to the Social Benefits Tribunal when clearly the waiting lists are enormous? We know that people are waiting until well into next year before they get a hearing. Obviously we know what impact that has on people. We are hearing that August 2001 is when some cases will be heard.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You're hearing 18 months?

**Mr Gravelle:** No. This is November.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Sorry. That's certainly longer than the ones with which I'm familiar. I think the issue there is that there just doesn't seem to be—first I believe the number of representatives on the tribunal should be increased.

**Mr Gravelle:** But will that happen?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It is something we are working on now. You'll see a few things on that issue in short order. It is one that has had my attention.

Two, there has been a challenge administratively. One or two members of the tribunal were on sick leave for a year. There was a problem in terms of the nature of someone who's acting in a quasi-judicial function at arm's length from the government in terms of our ability to watch that. Obviously that was a concern.

Three, in terms of the number of appointees, one of the things we'd like to get into a process and be better at it is that if someone is going to be leaving the board, for example in three months, if we could perhaps get an appointee identified three months before that, the legislative process could go forward so that any training could go forward. I believe there's a process where new board members shadow an existing board member to learn how

to do the job so that the instant that tribunal member leaves, someone will be able to start—

**Mr Gravelle:** But that doesn't explain why the funding has gone down. The 1998-99 actual was \$6.1 million, it's \$5.7 in 1999-2000, and the estimates for 2000-01 are just over \$4 million. That's a real reduction. It doesn't suggest you're actually going to be putting more resources into it. Can you explain that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It is something we are looking at putting more resources into as we prepare for the upcoming budget cycle, both in terms of members of the tribunal and in terms of resources. It is not one of which I need to be convinced.

**Mr Gravelle:** What is the timing we can expect here? This is an unconscionable delay for people who are obviously in a pretty perilous position. The delay right now is enormous, and you're saying you're going to cut it. What is the timetable you can commit to in terms of—

**Hon Mr Baird:** For additional appointees, which is a more immediate concern, I think you'll see something in short order. With respect to money, we will go through our budget process. It is an issue that has been identified to me. I agree there have got to be more resources placed there to get those time lines down to a more reasonable level, and obviously, the Minister of Finance normally presents his budget in late April or early May.

1600

**Mr Gravelle:** In the few minutes I have left on this part, I want to ask you about Andersen Consulting and some of the related spending on that. On the last legislative day prior to constituency week, public accounts indicated that you wrote a cheque to Andersen Consulting for \$60.5 million in fiscal year 1999-2000. How do you justify that? How many people were kicked off social assistance in order for that cheque to be written to Andersen?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We kicked off a number of people. In particular we kicked off one individual who had a gold credit card and was paying off monthly bills in excess of his monthly benefits.

**Mr Gravelle:** You sound like Ronald Reagan. There you go again.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We do kick people off welfare if they're not eligible, sir.

**Mr Gravelle:** In terms of Andersen Consulting, \$60.5 million is a lot of money.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The consolidated verification process has identified a lot of people who were entitled to collect social assistance, and—

**Mr Gravelle:** And their goal is to reduce the people on Ontario Works and to basically, well, you know—

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's not the goal.

**Mr Gravelle:** You've tied their profit margin to their ability to do that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's not their goal. Their goal is to ensure there is integrity of the system, that if someone is on Ontario Works, if someone is in receipt of an Ontario Works cheque, they are indeed eligible for an Ontario Works cheque.

**Mr Gravelle:** Which means you've now got this business transformation project and basically the business maze in terms of ODSP which we have some real concerns about, obviously, let alone the new call centres which there are great concerns about as well, and I hope to have more time to talk about that in the future.

It seems to me that basically what you have done is tied the business of denying support to those who need it most to the profit aspirations of a private company.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, you're wrong. We're not tying the need for support to someone who's vulnerable to the needs of a private company. If someone is on social assistance, if someone is on Ontario Works and they are in receipt of an Ontario Works cheque, there are certain criteria they are required to meet to be eligible. If you own 10 cars, you're not eligible. If we find someone with 10 cars, they're not eligible.

Through the measure of the consolidated verification process, they're going through on a case-by-case basis to identify people who are no longer eligible. What happened, basically, is that between 1985 and 1990 there were so many reforms to the welfare system that were so generous that when the economy in Ontario grew, the welfare caseload grew. The more jobs that were created in Ontario, the more people went on welfare, and in 1990-91 when the recession hit, the caseworkers were overwhelmed. We're talking 400 cases per person—

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Can the minister give him a chance to ask a question. I think he's satisfied.

**Mr Gravelle:** That is not the answer—it's about the answer I expected.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** I'd like at least to get two questions on the record; the minister may not be able to answer them today.

On page 55, it talks about the home and vehicle modification program, a new program that was initiated. My understanding is that there is a real backlog as far as applications are concerned. I don't really need the answer today, because I want to get another question on the record before we run out of time—

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got one minute.

**Mr Peters:** If you could provide me with the status of the home and vehicle modification program—where it's at, how much money is going to be invested for 2000-01 and maybe a general idea of the backlog—I'd appreciate that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** To answer your question, what we're going to get for 2000-01 is, of course, in the document in front of you. We have identified that there are obviously incredible pressures there, and the ministry did increase the support this year in the order of \$600,000 to provide more.

I think there is an expectations issue here. This program was expanded in terms of identifying and helping people be independent, whether it was for employment-related reasons or not, from the former vocational rehabilitation services. It's a new program. I think it would be dishonest to suggest it's ever going to be in a position



to universally provide and meet all the demands. I don't think that was the intention or that that was ever stated. It was meant to be a measure of support to help people with home and vehicle modifications, administered through the Ontario March of Dimes in their London office. We've identified the need to put more resources in. I'm not going to come to you as the Minister of Community and Social Services and say the program is going to meet all the needs, because it's not.

**The Vice-Chair:** Ms Martel.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Minister, just out of curiosity, how many people have lost their social assistance because they had a gold credit card?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'd have to check. That was one example—a good example.

**Ms Martel:** I'd like to know how many.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think there was one. But it's the best example.

**Ms Martel:** How many social assistance recipients have lost their benefits generally because of a conviction involving a credit card, never mind a gold card, just a credit card?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Could you repeat the question?

**Ms Martel:** How many people would have lost their social assistance because of fraud related to them having a credit card when they were on assistance—not even a gold card, just a credit card?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No one. You're allowed to have a credit card. There's no prohibition to your having a credit card.

I think people try to characterize the consolidated verification process as some American multinational company coming in here and haphazardly kicking people off to make money on the system, and that is not the case. The case is, they're going through and using a number of instruments—and obviously the government didn't have the capacity to do it or would have done it years ago—to bring in some new measures to confirm people's eligibility.

Of particular note, what I'm particularly proud of is their work with private sector credit agencies, where they're able for the first time to identify people's credit. If they're paying credit in excess of their benefits, that's obviously a concern. I used that gold credit card as an example to try to combat the misinformation being spread.

**Ms Martel:** I do have questions about Andersen, but your characterization of fraud in the social assistance system when you wave around the credit card—has this somehow been extensive?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think fraud is extensive in the social assistance system.

**Ms Martel:** That's why I asked the question: how many people have lost benefits because of fraud with a credit card, a gold card or whatever credit card?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We don't track that.

**Ms Martel:** You don't track that. So when you stand up in the House and flash around—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I said there's a lot of fraud in the system.

**Ms Martel:** But when you stand up in the House and flash around a credit card, and you've done that on more than one occasion—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I could do it again.

**Ms Martel:** —and after you referenced it here in the last meeting—

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's actually an air miles card. I don't have a gold credit card.

**Ms Martel:** —clearly you have no basis of fact whatsoever, no evidence, no proof, nothing whatsoever to suggest that people are actually involved in that kind of fraud, right?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That was one example, I repeat. But if the member wants to talk about—

**Ms Martel:** Can you find one for me? One person who did that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** If you want to discuss fraud, we found 5,747 people who were in jail collecting welfare, 2,475 people with undeclared spouses, 2,546 people with undeclared income, 1,958 people with undeclared earnings, 1,617 people with a false address, 771 people with overstated rent, 261 people with duplicate cheques and 280 people with undisclosed assets, not to mention 1,291 people for other reasons.

**Ms Martel:** How many were charged and convicted of fraud?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Last year, in the order of 750 people were convicted of criminal fraud.

**Ms Martel:** What is that as a percentage of your overall welfare caseload?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We don't—less than 1%, in terms of criminal convictions for fraud. But you've got to appreciate that in most parts of Ontario—in the city of Toronto, for example—if we uncover fraud of as little as \$2,000, the police don't even conduct an investigation.

**Ms Martel:** Let me ask this question, because this is important: How many of the cases you were looking at would have been administrative errors made by Comsoc staff?

**Hon Mr Baird:** None. These were not administrative errors. Pick another category.

**Ms Martel:** So all those 17,000 you are talking about were people purposely—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Those 5,700 people were in jail collecting welfare.

**Ms Martel:** —I don't want to use that word—for allegedly underestimating or overestimating their incomes, a huge group that was in jail. I don't think it was a crime to receive social assistance when they were in jail.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It is a crime. You're not allowed to receive welfare when you're in jail.

**Ms Martel:** You made that policy change, but these people weren't trying to rip off the system.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think they were.

**Ms Martel:** Clearly, people knew they were in jail, right?



**Hon Mr Baird:** Clearly they didn't, because we found 5,747 people. The left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing.

**Ms Martel:** Their address was a jail. Where were the cheques being sent? What I'm trying to get at—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think our fraud branch and the people who work at the ministry can be incredibly proud of the work and success they've had in restoring some integrity to the system. I suppose there might have been 2,475 people who just forgot they had a spouse.

**Ms Martel:** Well, your spouse-in-the-house rule is being challenged, isn't it? Your spouse-in-the-house rule has already been declared illegal, and now you're appealing it and are going to spend some more taxpayers' dollars doing that. But the court has ruled against you with respect to that rule.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If people are lying about having a spouse in the house in the first place, then that's another issue. You're required to fill out the application with honesty and integrity.

**Ms Martel:** But with respect to your numbers the question is, how many of the people you said we're actually dealing with fraud are we not in fact dealing with fraud if you look at the judgment that was made by the court?

**Hon Mr Baird:** You'll have to repeat that.

**Ms Martel:** Of the group you're saying didn't declare they had a spouse, were any of that category people who actually would have been supported by the court decision in terms of them being correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The court decision was very narrow in terms of the Family Benefits Act, which is a former program, so it would be impossible to tell that.

**Ms Martel:** Do you have any of the numbers?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It would be impossible, because we'd have to segment out the old program from the two new programs.

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**Ms Martel:** Is the ministry undertaking taking that with respect to the decision?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No.

**Ms Martel:** You're going to continue with the appeal?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We will continue with the appeal, yes.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have some questions I want to ask about provision for children, especially with respect to CASS, and I especially want to ask about aboriginal children. Your government has trumpeted your new funding formula for children's aid societies, but in that new funding formula there are very few, if any, provisions for part X of the act. Part X of the act deals with aboriginal children's aid societies and the unique situation of children in aboriginal communities.

Now, a number of those aboriginal organizations have asked either to meet with you or have asked for recognition that their situation is entirely different from the kind of situation that you might find in downtown Toronto, downtown Hamilton or downtown Ottawa.

They, for example, make use of a process or a procedure that they call customary care. They make use of other procedures that are really quite different from the procedures that would be used by children's aid societies in a more urban setting.

My question is, what steps are you prepared to take to recognize the unique challenges, the unique differences, that aboriginal children's aid societies have to face? I speak, for example, of the Weechi-It-E-Win or Tikanogan as examples of children's aid organizations which have a much, much different experience than you would find with the Toronto children's aid society. What steps, what measures are you prepared to take, are your officials prepared to take, to ensure that those aboriginal children's aid societies receive the kind of funding they need for their unique programs and their unique strategies, which by necessity are much different from what you'd find in Toronto?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll make a couple of comments and then I'll ask the assistant deputy minister to make some comments as well. I assume you're talking about the designation of additional aboriginal children's aid societies?

**Mr Hampton:** No, I'm talking specifically about part X of the act and I'm talking specifically about the unique strategies that many of those aboriginal children's aid societies have employed, have utilized and continue to utilize even though they are not funded under your new funding formula. What are you going to do to take steps to allow them to ensure that they continue on their very effective work?

Let me give you an example. Weechi-It-E-Win is a First Nations organization in my part of the province. To my knowledge, no child has died under the jurisdiction of Weechi-It-E-Win. They have been very effective in terms of their interventions and in terms of their work with the family and their work within the community. But much of the work that they do is not funded and is not recognized by your new funding formula. What steps are you prepared to take to ensure that they have the funding they need to do their jobs?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We're certainly encouraged when aboriginal organizations with child welfare and child protection mandates and goals and objectives undertake initiatives that are cognizant of particular, even geographically different, aboriginal values. We're aware of that. I understand that the political leadership in some of the First Nation organizations has expressed concern about the implementation of the child welfare reform in terms of what it covered under the existing funding formula, and then the bigger issue on which I have received feedback from those representatives has been the designation of additional agencies. I've certainly heard the two concerns.

We did commit to look at the funding formula after it was implemented and to look at potential changes. Obviously, limited budgets are always a problem, but I think we've demonstrated a commitment to child welfare and child reform in terms of funding. We've seen

funding increase in excess of 80% and I think it will be substantially more than that this year at the end of the day and next year, to recognize not just increasing volumes; we're paying more for foster care, we're paying more for other things.

I'll ask Cynthia Lees, the assistant deputy minister for children, to make some comments as well.

**Ms Cynthia Lees:** My name is Cynthia Lees, Ministry of Community and Social Services. Following up on what the minister has said, we've been working very closely with the Association of Native Child and Family Services of Ontario and the native societies to look at the impact of the child welfare reform in the new funding framework. We have also provided the association with dollars to hire a coordinator, which will allow them to look at the particular issues as they relate to the new funding framework. So we are working very closely with both the societies and the association to look at how this funding framework affects the native societies. We have also recently provided dollars to help build their capacity and train their staff. So basically we are working very closely with them to look at their particular issue, including customary care.

**Mr Hampton:** One of the questions they ask is, why wasn't this done before the new funding formula and the legislative changes were made? Many of these aboriginal children's aid societies have incredible success records, yet no effort was made to accommodate their uniqueness, their differences, the unique challenges they face. The legislation and the funding formula were simply changed holus-bolus, despite the fact that the funding formula is in many ways quite contradictory to the work they do. In many cases they try to put the emphasis on prevention and on working with the family, and working with the family in the community, so that an intervention in terms of taking the child out of the family and out of the community doesn't have to happen.

Their complaint is that their good work, which I would challenge anyone to examine, isn't recognized and hasn't been recognized and needs to be recognized. So I hear what you're saying about your becoming aware of the problem, but many of them are in a very difficult situation now. It's not six months from now; they're already in a difficult situation because your funding formula simply doesn't acknowledge the kind of work they do, the procedures they use and the successes they have achieved. So what are you going to do?

**Hon Mr Baird:** What you're communicating to us, in the cases of the one or two agencies you've mentioned, is that it's obvious they're not satisfied with the level of their input to date. I know the panel of experts, when they released their report in I think September 1998, conducted consultations. They were included in those consultations across the province.

**Mr Hampton:** I don't want to contradict you, but it was a one-afternoon meeting and you can't call that consultations.

**Hon Mr Baird:** They held two information sessions with the First Nations and aboriginal organizations in the

development of the legislation. The ministry staff also met with some of the designated aboriginal societies and the Association of Native Child and Family Services of Ontario and the Union of Ontario Indians to discuss the legislation before it was passed. Obviously there are continuing concerns about it in terms of the number of agencies which have been designated and in terms of what is covered under the funding formula.

**Ms Lees:** We have also made ourselves available to meet with the chiefs and we have asked for a meeting so that we can look at some of the concerns they're expressing, but again I'd like to stress that we are working very closely with their association and with the five societies to address some of their particular concerns and needs that they have identified. So the ministry is working closely with them and, like I said, we've provided them dollars to increase their own capacity, to develop their own trainers—

**Mr Hampton:** Capacity for what?

**Ms Lees:** For the protection of children.

**Mr Hampton:** They would argue that where they need the increase in capacity is on the preventive side of things, given the levels of poverty you find in a lot of aboriginal communities, given some of the other social problems that you find, that a few dollars invested at the prevention side of things actually will save you a lot of money in terms of child protection later on. That's their essential argument. The new funding formula, and this government's new regime, is all about taking children into protection. But their whole theme is that we can avoid the heavy costs of that, we can avoid some of the other collateral damage that happens, if you'll recognize the very good work they've been doing for many years on the prevention side. That's the core of the argument.

What is this government prepared to do and what is this ministry prepared to do to recognize that these organizations have always concentrated on the prevention? They've been very successful at it. Any examination of their record will show that. What are you prepared to do to recognize that they need help on the prevention side, not necessarily on the protection side?

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**Hon Mr Baird:** As a member of the Legislature, if you as their representative want to come forward with some thoughts, I'm certainly prepared to meet with you on it; I'm certainly prepared to meet with them on it. If you want to come forward with any ideas or suggestions, we are looking at the future of the funding formula. We're certainly open to receiving suggestions or advice on that.

**Mr Hampton:** My response is, how soon? I met with representatives of some of those children's aid societies. I met with the grand chief of Treaty 3 and a number of chiefs who actually work on this specific issue and they have been trying to raise the issues on a number of occasions. They're quite prepared to meet. They're quite prepared to provide me with the material which sets forth their position. They want to continue to provide good children's aid societies, especially on the prevention side,



as they have been doing for the last 14 or 15 years. The new funding formula and the new regime don't recognize the unique things they did and do under part X of the act. That's the pitch they want to make.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Your intervention is not unconstructive. The ministry, I think, would be happy to sit down with them.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, you're the minister. Tell me when. Before Christmas?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'd be happy to, sir.

**Mr Hampton:** Wonderful. Now can I pass on to the next issue I want to raise?

The effect of your funding formula and the effect of the new regime are to essentially now base the funding of CASs upon the number of children they take into protection. It'll cut away some of the other things and that's what emerges. So in a large organization, for example, like the Catholic CAS here in Toronto or the Toronto CAS, where they take a number of children into protection, they have the funding which allows them to do that.

My experience in my part of the world, where we actually still have organic communities, where uncles and aunts and grandparents still live in the same community, is that there is less of taking children into protection—I'm talking both aboriginal and non-aboriginal here—and there is more work in terms of working with the extended organic family. But I'll give you the example of the CAS that I know, that I used to be legal counsel for before I was elected to this place. They're now put in a position where the pressure is on them to take more children into protection. In other words, if they want the funding to do their job, they have to be out there almost headhunting, saying, "Well, we can take a child here; we can take a child there," in order to get the funding to do their job. If they don't do that, they're going to be forced into, in effect, a regional amalgamation that makes no sense.

Let me give you a further example. My constituency is larger than Great Britain, about the size of Sweden. There are two non-aboriginal CASs: there's the Kenora Children's Aid Society and there's the Fort Frances-Rainy River Children's Aid Society. The reason there are two is because the geographic distance between the two means that trying to amalgamate them would make no sense.

Let me give you the parallels. When your government was looking at the forced amalgamation of school boards, they initially said there will be one large school board for everything west of Thunder Bay on the public side. They abandoned it. It wouldn't make any sense. There are two school boards: there's essentially the Keewatin-Patricia school board and the Rainy River school board. One operates along Highway 11, which is Yonge Street extended; the other operates along the Trans-Canada Highway.

**The Vice-chair:** You've got a minute, Mr Hampton.

**Mr Hampton:** So they recognize that. When your government moved toward district services boards, you didn't try to amalgamate one whole one; you set up the

Kenora district services board and the Rainy River district services board. They recognized that geography renders one big, amalgamated CAS as just an absurd idea. But your ministry right now is going to force the CAS to do what you wouldn't do to the district services board and what the Ministry of Education wouldn't do in education. I am asking you: if it doesn't make sense for education, if it doesn't make sense for all the other social services, why would you force it on the CASs?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I am not aware of any initiative to amalgamate the two CASs in your part of the province. I am troubled by the thought that any child protection or child welfare organization, worker or professional would want to seek out removing children from their home just to get increased funds. I'll be honest with you: I haven't seen that.

**Mr Hampton:** That's not—they're saying, "Look, if we look at the funding formula, that's the direction it pushes us in." I talked with some of those social workers on the weekend. They said, "All of the emphasis now, all of our emphasis in terms of where the funding comes from, is not upon prevention, it's not upon working with the family in the community to avoid a child protection situation; it's about taking more children into child protection."

**Hon Mr Baird:** The emphasis is on protection. There's no doubt about it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Minister, time has run out.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Minister, last week was constituency week, of course, and I was in my office, as all good MPPs were, talking to my constituents. I had some local business people in the construction trades come to the office and complain that they were not able to hire a number of people for their businesses—unskilled jobs—people who were on welfare who were actually coming to their places of work, interviewing, and then declining to take jobs that were paying \$15 an hour, for a number of reasons, one of which had to do with outside work and the cold weather coming on. Another reason was because it was hard manual labour. I had another reason given that they were still doing well enough with their welfare cheques that they didn't have to take jobs such as the construction trades offered.

In 1995, when we came to power, there were a million-plus people on social assistance. Since 1995, more than half a million are off. We have achieved savings for the taxpayer in the amount of \$8.2 billion. This year your ministry budget is down, year over year from last year, by \$310 million.

The NDP and the Liberals are constantly harping about our government's wrong or misguided policies. In fact, we heard Shelley Martel right here in committee this afternoon say, how many recipients who had been taken off social assistance were due to fraud or how many had been in jail? I submit to you that the people in my riding, who are hard-working, blue-collar, unionized workers who voted for me, are upset that there would even be one who was in jail or guilty of fraud receiving welfare because that's coming out of their tax money.



We have the best economy in this province right now that we have ever had. We still have nearly half a million people on welfare, and I am being asked by employers and employees alike in my riding why we still have half a million people on welfare when some of these welfare recipients are unwilling to take a good job even when it's an unskilled job. I wonder if you could comment on that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I guess it is a challenge for any government in terms of helping people make that transition from welfare to work. I think what happened in the past was that perhaps too many good people got stuck in a bad system, which was not helpful for their career path, obviously. Ontario Works is a mandatory program. You have to participate. Last year, in 1999-2000, there were about 4,182 people disqualified for refusing employment supports, refusing a community placement, refusing an employment placement. So it's a small percentage and I would underline that; it's not something which I would say is commonplace.

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It is a concern, for example, when you look at the greenhouse industry. We've heard our colleague Mr Crozier talk about the greenhouse industry outside of Leamington, where they're bringing in literally hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of workers from Mexico to work in tomato greenhouses, for example, when not too far down the road, in Windsor, Ontario, they have substantial welfare caseloads. It's not a stretch, as you've said, to say, "How can we be bringing so many people in on temporary permits, temporary visas, to do work they can't find folks here in this country to do, particularly in tomatoes in greenhouses?" It's not like picking tobacco. It's tough work, it's not easy work, but there are many jobs that certainly require greater endurance, and that is a concern when you see the growing economy and that some folks lack the ability to get into that job. I'm concerned particularly when you hear people—the odd story; I don't hear them regularly but I do hear them the odd time—not wanting to accept employment for preferential reasons. Obviously, that's not the whole purpose of the program. That's not the way to apply the program, what the program is all about; that's not the way it was designed.

I guess what we're trying to do is provide the supports to people so they're able to get the jobs. Obviously, the challenge is to ensure that they get them. The caseload ratios have gone down and hopefully caseworkers have more time. They don't have 400 cases any more and they can spend more time trying to be job coaches, trying to facilitate someone making that transition. That's why one of the initiatives we want to move forward with that was contained in the Blueprint was expanded caseworker training programs to help people identify that new role, the new responsibility as part of their job. But if there are specific instances where people are saying they don't want to take a job because it doesn't pay enough and they'd rather stay on welfare, obviously we're concerned about that.

You are required to accept reasonably proximate work in your field and even, in some cases, beyond that. So if

there are specific examples we can look into and challenge our policies and procedures, we're certainly prepared to do that. We'd welcome that sort of input.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Thank you, Minister, for your comments today.

I can't for the life of me figure out why the two opposition parties in this province would be against drug treatment. Are they suggesting that we should condone the taking of drugs and not assist anybody in trying to help them get off drugs? I can't understand that. I can remember we had said during the campaign that we wanted to make sure we offered treatment for these welfare folks to be able to make them contributors to society—you know, the comment that you can't get off welfare if you're on drugs. Certainly, if you've ever had somebody you employed who was on some type of drug, and I did have, and that drug happened to be alcohol, and I don't believe that is any different from some of the other drugs that are out there these days—you cannot do your job and you jeopardize a business, you jeopardize your customers, you jeopardize your family if you're on that. I just can't get it through my possibly thick skull that the opposition would be against trying to help people get off drugs. I can't understand that. I was not brought up that way and I've never tried to bring up my kids or my grandkids that way, saying, "Hey, I condone the taking of drugs, and if you're on them, I don't want to help you get off." I'm sorry, I don't operate that way and I have real difficulty when I listen to what came out in the House today and what I hear in this committee.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Could I intervene on that just for a moment to respond? You can take issue with the entire opposition, save the Leader of the Opposition, because he is not against the idea. He said during last year's election campaign, "No, I'm not against the idea," when asked whether he was in favour of drug testing. Then, the following day or two days later there's drug testing—

**Ms Martel:** That's different than drug treatment.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The member for Nickel Belt is correct; there's drug treatment and drug testing. When asked whether he was in favour of drug testing, he said, "No, I'm not against the idea." That's the drug testing side. The member opposite from Peterborough will be interested to learn that two days later, Liberal Party president Tim Murphy talked about treatment and said, "In fact, McGuinty's policy is supportive of drug treatment." So we've got drug treatment and drug testing.

**Mr Gravelle:** Of course we support drug treatment. We fund the agencies—

**Mr Stewart:** Thank you, Mr Gravelle. It's my turn. I have the floor.

I thank you for that, Minister.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I appreciate Dalton's support.

**Mr Stewart:** If you don't know that somebody has a drug problem, it makes it extremely difficult to treat them.

The other thing Mr Wettlaufer was talking about was fraud. If I go into a bank, whether I steal \$100 or \$500 or \$1 million, it's still stealing. When I find that people in a

system steal from those people who need the service, I also have a lot of difficulty and I don't understand, again, why the opposition condones fraud. I can't understand that. I wasn't brought up that way and I have difficulty understanding why this group over here condones fraud.

Anyway, that was not my question. I'm about to get to my—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Stewart:** You people are saying it, not me. I'm just repeating what you said. It appears I've possibly hit a nerve here, because they seem to be trying to get out of it. They were the ones who were saying this, not Gary Stewart. They're the ones who are saying this.

Anyway, the question, Minister. I've finished rambling now but may come back to it later. You had a program with Ontario Works for communities that exceeded the target in putting people on Ontario Works into the workforce. In my riding of Peterborough and Peterborough county, I believe we were the seventh-highest in getting people into the Ontario Works program, I think, to the tune of \$373,000. I commend both Peterborough and Peterborough county for this.

I think this is an absolutely tremendous initiative. I'm a great believer in responding to and rewarding groups that exceed the targets set, especially if they're targets that are going to help society. I'd like you to make a couple of comments on this particular initiative.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You're correct in terms of Peterborough and Peterborough county. That consolidated municipal service did not just manage to meet the target but they were at 193% of the target, so you are right. I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit your constituency to talk to some of the caseworkers themselves and people on the front lines, the mayor and other members of the council, and congratulate them for that support. They've obviously accepted the challenge, and that makes a huge difference in terms of lives of people who need just the most basic things like some experience, a job reference, some self-esteem and some self-confidence.

That's why we strongly support the program. It has not been an easy one. It's been one of those which has been a challenge. We've been able to double the number of folks on Ontario Works placements this year over last year. Then we're going to follow through with our commitment in the Blueprint campaign document to double them once we've met the targets. I think this year we're on track to do that in terms of a 50% increase this year over last year, which is good news. Some will question the value of a community placement officer. We think it is particularly important as part of the solution.

**Mr Stewart:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** I just want to focus on London for a minute, and your deputy minister probably could address some of the issues.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The deputy is really keen to answer some questions this morning, so if you have any hard ones, he'll answer them.

**Mr Mazzilli:** In October in London, we saw welfare cases go down to 9,729 from a high in June 1995 of 21,097. What kind of saving would that represent for the city of London?

**Mr John Fleming:** Mr Mazzilli, we don't have actual dollars here, but the saving is certainly a very substantial one.

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**Hon Mr Baird:** One thing I'd just add is that for a municipality, while it's only 20% in terms of the benefit itself that they're responsible for, in most cases that 20% is a substantially higher percentage of their budget than the 80% is for us. That's particularly the case because the health budget just keeps going up and up and our share of the budget keeps going down and down because of all that new money flooding into the health care system.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I want to go back to—this is certainly something I was not going to bring up, but since you did start the consultation on drug testing, I will bring it up. In Ontario we still have numbers on the order of over half a million people on welfare. As you said, welfare recipients with addiction problems, drug problems, may be as low as 3% to 10%. If we split that in half and make it 5%, we're still talking about 25,000 to 30,000 people who are not able to work their way back into the workforce because of severe addiction problems.

I've seen it, and I will participate in this consultation right now and give you some ideas. I've seen the crack houses, where a large number of people live under one roof, under one deposit box and the welfare cheques go in. Guess what? They never see them; they sign them over to someone. So if we target areas—certainly we don't have to go around and test everybody, but there are areas we can target that likely have an enormous percentage of addiction.

I think you hit the nail on the head before. The Toronto police told you that people with severe addictions have habits that go into the thousands of dollars a day. Many resort to dealing drugs to support those habits, and many resort to prostitution to support those habits. To do nothing would be irresponsible, Minister. I encourage you to do this in a targeted way. Certainly you're not going to help everyone, but of the 25,000 or 30,000 people, if we keep our estimates low, that is a substantial number to try to help.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's obvious we're going to be more help by trying than by not trying. The effects and the costs are quite startling. I've had the opportunity to meet with some representatives of the Metro Toronto drug squad and to learn what it costs to support a habit. I found that absolutely extraordinary. I had absolutely no idea how much it actually costs to support an addiction. This is a gigantic challenge for anyone with a significant substance abuse problem whether they're working or not.

These officers told me that far too often people are put in a situation out of desperation and have to find ways of supporting that habit. It's not uncommon, I am told, for a heroin habit to cost up to \$800 a day. Obviously someone can't support that on a \$520 welfare cheque. It is a



tremendous human tragedy when people have to get involved in selling narcotics themselves or resort to prostitution or crime to support a habit. It's a human tragedy, particularly for young people, often youths, and indeed in some cases older children.

Obviously we're tremendously concerned about that and want to provide that help. But what it points to is that it's far more complicated and far more serious than one might expect at first sight. I think the easiest and most expedient thing to do would be to simply turn our backs and say we are going to write these people off: "We're just not going to worry about it. We'll send them a cheque month after month, year after year, and just hope that some morning, out of miraculous inspiration, people will wake up and want to get help and then, if we're lucky, we'll be there," or we can try to push them into taking that help.

I think a substantial amount of research says that mandatory treatment doesn't work. There's also a substantial amount of research which says it can be every bit as effective as voluntary treatment. I've even read some articles which suggest, in essence, "Is there really any voluntary treatment?" There's always some sort of intervention, whether it's through the courts and police, in terms of someone facing a charge and having the option of jail time or drug treatment, or be it job intervention at work, where someone's employer says, "You can't keep showing up for work drunk," or "You can't keep showing up for work high on drugs. You've got to get some help. We'll provide you with the supports to get that help, in terms of time off work etc.," or it'll come through someone's family in terms of a marriage or a family not being able to stay together unless a change in course is made. I think a certain element of consequence to not taking help and not taking treatment has to be in place, and it has to be a real one. I wish we could just bring in a volunteer program and everyone would go to it.

I don't think this issue is any different from any of the other welfare reforms in Ontario. Our work-for-welfare program is a mandatory program. There are not just expectations but requirements. People are required to be part of the solution; they're required to do something in exchange for their welfare cheque. They're required to take retraining, they're required to take basic skills, they're required to take a community placement or they're required to take a part-time job. They're required to do something in exchange for that cheque. And it's right there in that regulation: accept drug treatment. I don't know why we would make an exception there.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** I was actually chatting with the member for London-Fanshawe before about identifying people with addictions. I know that he, as a former police officer, and case workers who deal on a regular basis with folks with drug addictions—he thought there are telltale signs where people could direct folks with problems. You could look at some of those signs and say, "These are the folks we need to concentrate on who probably have a problem and whom we need to get into treatment programs." I just wonder if you want to comment on that a bit more.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Certainly I'll have some input, but the ministry, through the consultation, should look at places of high incidence of drug use such as crack houses and so on. Although those types of places are transient and move from location to location, I suspect the social agencies and the police services within those communities usually have a pretty good record of tracking where those establishments are. That is the highest percentage of people you can try to help with a program like that.

**The Acting Chair (Mr Michael Gravelle):** Thank you, Mr Mazzilli. Your time has expired.

**Mr Curling:** I appreciate the opportunity to put something on record here. I'll just make a comment first.

Andersen Consulting, as you just stated, recently received about \$61 million toward their fee to clear up the welfare mess you said the province found itself in. Mr Mazzilli talked about London today having only about 9,000 people on welfare, which was reduced from 21,000. I understand that across the province you may have had about 300,000 people who came off welfare or were put off welfare, who were abusing the system and so on, and you still have about half a million people on welfare.

It seems to me that, yes, the system was in a mess and wasn't working. How many bureaucrats have been fired because they did not do their jobs in this process? It seems to me the only people who got off welfare who seem to have been contributing to this mess were the people on welfare. But of the people administering the welfare screening, was anyone fired because of—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes, you bet: the entire David Peterson cabinet and the entire Bob Rae cabinet.

**Mr Curling:** Don't be cynical with me now.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No.

**Mr Curling:** It wasn't David Peterson and the cabinet who caused it. I'm saying there are people who are monitoring these people—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Who was it? If it wasn't David Peterson and his cabinet who were monitoring, who was it? I wasn't at the cabinet table. If you know, I'd love to know and we'll all go looking for them.

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**Mr Curling:** I presume that you won't tell me the answer to that one because you wouldn't tell me that—if I go to the bank today and somebody doesn't screen me properly and gives me the loan without any proper sort of screening process and I get it, you're going to say the president of the bank was doing that or so but not the clerk who has thought of putting it through. That's the kind of answer you're giving me.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think to paraphrase one of your cabinet colleagues in the Peterson government, Mr Nixon, he said, "We threw a whole bunch of money at the problem and hoped it would get better," and it didn't work. Rules were changed, changes were made to the eligibility, benefits were increased, and that was done in good economic times.

This is the chart I frequently use. A lot of the blame goes to the New Democratic Party, which is perhaps



unfair. Between 1985 and 1990, a huge amount of job creation, welfare rolls soared. Then when the bottom fell out of the economy and when poor Floyd Laughren found himself on the seventh floor of the Frost Building south, they simply couldn't cope. That's when you saw the welfare rolls really soar based on the Peterson Liberals' welfare policies.

**Mr Curling:** Mr Minister, let me go to another point, because I want to get the answer from you, actually. There's another area that I spoke to you about and you were quite forthcoming with that. I think you and the Minister of Health, Ms Witmer, have put forward a comprehensive mental health housing policy that is to deliver housing for those with special needs and other people like that. I think it was far overdue to make that strategic move.

I know you want to create a single, consolidated provincially funded residential care program and I know there are consultations that are going on with the various providers represented from the municipalities and associations, owners and operators of residential care homes. You know, there is quite a complex array of people who need special-needs housing itself.

I know what you've put forward is just about a month of consultation across the province, you and the minister. I feel it's completely inadequate in order to address all those who are providing those services. I think there is a wide array of people. Among the most important people in all this are really the owners and operators of the residential care homes. They need to be consulted.

I have a suspicion here that there are associations who are coming and saying, "We are going to represent you all" and they will then take over the delivery of these residential homes.

Would you consider having a wider consultative approach for owners and operators of these residential care homes so they can give you a much more direct and closer monitoring of needs and services that are required so you can have a better policy? I don't think the one month will be adequate. Would you consider that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm certainly realistic in terms of any outcome. As you know and we discussed, we are reviewing four types of mental supported housing, three operated by the Ministry of Health, with which I'm not that familiar, the fourth being the domiciliary hostel program offered through the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

We have been doing a good amount of consultation with dom hostel operators across the province. Will we speak to every single independent operator? Undoubtedly not. When we come forward with some reforms, I suspect they won't meet with unanimity in terms of approval. That rarely is the case. I think the system is in need of some reform, particularly on the funding side with respect to the per diem for dom hostel, which has been identified as a significant issue.

I've had the opportunity to tour a number of dom hostels. I toured the Edgewood Care Centre in the constituency of your caucus colleague, M<sup>me</sup> Boyer, and

talked to some of the residents there, talked to the owner-operators, talked to people who work there, and—

**Mr Curling:** I just want to say—because, you know, my colleague has been very generous in giving me the time. I just want to say to you, don't get caught up in the rut of not opening up consultation. I think you can have a better policy in a much more effective way by listening to home owners and those who deliver the special needs for those residents there.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I certainly appreciate the advice and if your constituents have any advice in that regard, I'd certainly welcome it, sooner rather than later in terms of being able to contribute it to the debate.

**Mr Gravelle:** I just want to return, if I can, to Andersen Consulting and the spending related to that. The auditor two years ago certainly had expressed some very strong concerns about the contract that was signed by your ministry with Andersen Consulting, and I think there's a reasonably good chance that when the value-for-money audit comes out next Tuesday, I believe, on the 21st, we may hear some more about that. I think it's only fair to ask. You know we've got \$60.5 million given to Andersen Consulting in fiscal year 1999-2000. I'd like to ask you to precisely break down how that money was spent: how much for staff, how much for services, how much for technical support. I presume you could break that down for us.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Certainly that meets our obligations under the contract. I think the auditor came forward with good advice that was helpful to the ministry, helpful to Management Board of Cabinet, helpful to the government in terms of the whole nature of a common purpose procurement. Designing and building and rolling out new welfare processes and technologies is not an easy effort. I've used a number of analogies, particularly like getting a new kitchen built in your home when you've had an old one. While it's unpleasant in terms of the havoc it wreaks on the family living there, a better day arrives when the overhaul is done.

**Mr Gravelle:** But can you break it down, Minister?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The \$60-odd-million supports our obligations on the contract. It supports the consolidated verification process, which made great strides in the first year, and we've expanded it this year to go into more parts of the province in more areas. It also meets the process in terms of designing the new technology and in terms of building the new technology, and now we're rolling out the new technology.

**Mr Gravelle:** Could you table it in detail for us? I think everybody would be curious as to exactly how the money breaks out.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We can get more details for you. Sure.

**Mr Gravelle:** I presume that what you're relating to is the automation of the system, as well, automating the system. Is that part of what Andersen is involved with as well?

**Hon Mr Baird:** With the technology as well. Yes.

**Mr Gravelle:** It's fascinating: on page 69 of the estimates your ministry spent \$52 million more than was

budgeted in 1999-2000 and is planning to spend \$50 million more in 1999-2000 for supplies and equipment, and that's above and beyond the \$60.5 million that was given to Andersen. So we're talking some extraordinary dollars here. But if you could table that, we'd like to see the details, I think.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll certainly try to get you more details.

**Mr Gravelle:** Just some straight estimates questions: on page 47, in 1999-2000 you underspent to the tune of \$160 million in the area of Ontario Works financial assistance and \$80 million in the area of employment supports; on page 57, you underspent in the area of employment assistance for the Ontario disability support program by \$13 million. Can you explain that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm very familiar with both of those. I'd be happy to offer an explanation.

In terms of financial assistance, greater than anticipated caseload declines, that was in terms of financial assistance under Ontario Works, were largely responsible for the underexpenditure. We used the best information, through our forecasting branch, provided by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance, I think with good reason, uses the conservative end of the spectrum of private sector forecasters in terms of their economic model, which is something that, by the very nature of our using the Ministry of Finance's numbers, we use as well. That answers the first question.

The second part concerns Ontario Works employment assistance. We were underspending it; we weren't using all the resources that were available to us that we could. I think we could use more money to help people make that transformation from welfare to work. That was 1999-2000. You'll see we've certainly spent more money there than we did the year before, you'll see us spend more money this year than we did the year before, and I suspect you'll see us spend more money next year than we did the year before.

Obviously, the face of the caseload is changing to a great extent and more expensive interventions are required in terms of getting people the skills and the supports they need to go into work.

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For example, I think \$7 million in terms of rewarding municipalities which exceed their targets is one area. We've done a lot of innovation fund proposals for community placements and for the harder to serve, which you'll see probably more of in terms of supporting innovative social service delivery.

The third point you raised was ODSP employment which again I can speak to. That budget is being doubled to \$35 million. The process hasn't happened overnight and it's rolling out over a few years. I think you'll see a lot more money spent this year than last. I think you'll see close to the full amount spent in the next year or two.

**Mr Gravelle:** Minister, let's just turn to the technical side too for a moment. Obviously in terms of your business transformation project and what Andersen is doing as well, we've heard that no new staff are being hired on in the ministry's Ontario disability support program

offices despite an increasing caseload, from 180,000 to 195,000 in the last two years.

We know that you have closed some offices as well. I think my colleague the member for Nickel Belt asked the question last time too. This is obviously of great concern in terms of people being able to access the program. How many more will be closing?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That office hasn't closed. Which office closings—

**Mr Gravelle:** You're talking about one person being left there now. Is that—

**Hon Mr Baird:** That office hasn't closed. Which office closings were of concern to you specifically?

**Mr Gravelle:** The office in Fort Frances was the one that—

**Hon Mr Baird:** That one hasn't closed. Are there any others that have been of concern to you?

**Mr Gravelle:** That's the question I'm asking you. What are your plans? Are you planning to close or downgrade offices? If it's a question of definition of term, you're downgrading the office, the ability to actually access. Whether there's one person there does not mean they're able to access the program and be well served by the process. So are there other—what are your plans?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I thought you had said that you were concerned by office closings "such as"—and I just wondered which ones you were concerned about, because we haven't closed that one. Are there any others with which you're concerned?

**Mr Gravelle:** That office has been downsized, has it not?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think there's one person whose contract expired, but you said a number of them were of concern. Is there—

**Mr Gravelle:** Correct me. That's just great, Minister. Thank you very much; I appreciate it. But what I'm asking is, are you planning to close any offices in terms of that? How many are you planning to close? Which ones are you planning to downgrade into one-person offices? I just think that's information—

**Hon Mr Baird:** To date, they haven't been a concern to the opposition.

**Ms Jessica Hill:** Jessica Hill, with the Ministry of Community and Social Services. In terms of our plans for closing offices, we periodically review whether there are satellite offices where the caseload is so small that it can be served from a more centralized site within a region. So currently we are looking at Fort Frances, but we'll assess whether the 1-800 number is working effectively for the CSR service, which we use as a model in a number of communities in the north. We've had a very small number of complaints. Usually, it has to do with aspects of the services they're receiving as opposed to whether they're being responded to effectively.

In terms of access, all of the offices that serve smaller communities in the north provide what we call emergency response service that is delivered within 24 hours, which means essentially that if someone called with a specific need to fill out an application or had a problem, a



worker would be responding to their concern within 24 hours, including visiting their community if required.

**Mr Gravelle:** I've been just been told that Port Hope is the other office.

**Ms Hill:** Port Hope has closed, but the service is delivered in Port Hope on a regular basis for scheduled appointments. I can give you specific information on Port Hope. Just a second.

**Mr Gravelle:** The concern is that with the new system that is being put in place in terms of the 1-800 number, the plan is to close a number of smaller offices because of the 1-800 number, the whole new way of doing business, which I happen to be really concerned about and quite critical of. I'm not sure it's serving the people the way they want in terms of the interactive voice response, but finish off; I'm sorry.

**Ms Hill:** On the question of whether there's a significant number of more closures considered, in fact most of the closures of satellite offices have already taken place, and they took place because the business was largely being restructured. In transferring the sole-support cases to the municipalities, there was a significant change in our caseload and therefore there were some communities that had a very small remaining caseload. Obviously, the nature of the program design was a very big change. The second aspect of this is that staff were also given opportunities to move to municipalities for work.

I think most of the restructuring has happened. There are literally a very small number of satellite offices we would consider looking at at this point. The changes have been made, and it has not affected customer service negatively.

**Mr Gravelle:** There are no plans to close any more of those offices; in other words, the closures have been done.

**Ms Hill:** Yes.

**Mr Gravelle:** I've got some real concerns about the new system in terms of—there's a recorded message at one office that we called that says, "We will be introducing interactive voice response for social assistance telephone systems," or IVR for short, "to get selected personal case file information and announcements from the ODSF."

This is designed to what? To save you money? I can't see how it's designed to help people actually access a system that's already difficult to access. We know it takes a long time to get claims through. Do you not have concerns about the fact that some people are not able to use that system or will find it difficult? Some people don't have Touch-Tone phones; that's still reasonably common.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If there are people without Touch-Tone phones or if there are people with a disability who are unable to utilize it, obviously we'll provide it another way.

I think IVR can provide better service more inexpensively in terms of someone calling to get the status of a cheque or someone making some of these routine calls that you can now do through IVR. I think the initial

implementations have been quite positive. If people want to check on the status of a cheque after hours, they have the ability to do so. There's been a high level of satisfaction. This isn't any different from a number of other consumer services. But if people don't have a Touch-Tone phone, they'll call—

**Mr Gravelle:** Let's be honest. We all hate this. I mean everybody hates it. We all hate calling up anywhere and not being able to access it except through—we can't deal with real people any more. We are talking about a situation like this and on my next go-round I want to talk about call centres in terms of, in a general sense, the pilot project. But the fact is it's more difficult.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's fairly easy.

**Mr Gravelle:** I know a lot of people who find it very difficult to access that kind of a system, and so do you, Minister; everybody does. It makes it more difficult to access and people tend to drop off, and in this situation you've got people who are on disability who are going to have a far more difficult time, some of them, accessing it and will drop off. This clearly is one of the methods of reducing the caseload, it seems to me. Some people are going to drop away because they can't access it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I just don't see the link, sir.

**Mr Gravelle:** I know you don't, sir.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, I was curious to hear your colleagues talk about how fraud is fraud and it's wrong, and stealing is stealing and it's wrong. There was some nodding of heads, and you would have probably nodded yours too, so I've got to ask you, what do you really think about tax evasion and MPPs involved in that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm not aware of any member of the Legislature who has been involved with tax evasion. I think any kind of fraud is bad.

**Ms Martel:** So do I.

**Hon Mr Baird:** My mandate at the Ministry of Community and Social Services is to ensure that there's integrity to the system. I want to be honest. Some of the most impressive people I've seen working in this provincial government are in our fraud branch at the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They are very, very well regarded and they can be exceptionally proud of the job they do. They do a fantastic job. Some of the initiatives they've done have been at extraordinarily low cost and have been able to yield gigantic benefits to taxpayers. I don't know about the folks in Nickel Belt, but I know the folks in Nepean-Carleton strongly support integrity in the system and strongly support our antifraud measures.

**Ms Martel:** I'm worried about tax evasion too, Minister.

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**Hon Mr Baird:** By all means, bring those to the Minister of Finance. I'm concerned about all kinds of fraud.

**Ms Martel:** I want to ask you about your testing. Let me begin by this: you would agree that there's a difference between mandatory testing and mandatory drug treatment?



**Hon Mr Baird:** Correct.

**Ms Martel:** All right. So what I want to know from you is, your government's proposing mandatory drug testing for social assistance recipients.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I want to give you a clear answer so I'll preface it.

**Ms Martel:** I'd like to get a clear answer. That would be great.

**Hon Mr Baird:** To preface my comments, we announced this morning that we'll be going out and consulting over the next four to six weeks to get some best advice. We want to consult with five groups. We want to consult with the public, those people who depend on the system and use it and those who pay for it. We want to talk to drug treatment experts on treatment capacity, medical practitioners. We want to talk to other jurisdictions both on capacity and on their experience in terms of social assistance in this area. We want to talk to legal experts to get their best advice. We want to talk to municipalities and caseworkers on how to administratively implement the policy.

I agree with you wholeheartedly: there are two issues. There's mandatory treatment and there's mandatory testing. I think it would be a leap to suggest that the government is entertaining or will entertain a policy where stapled to every welfare application will be a Styrofoam cup. We're not proposing, to my knowledge—I've never talked about any sort of universal chemical screening of people on social assistance.

**Ms Martel:** What exactly are you proposing then with respect to mandatory drug testing? Who is going to be tested?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll give you a window on our thinking. We don't have a proposal in front of us, but we're going to consult—

**Ms Martel:** Yes, but you're consulting with people, so you must be consulting with something. You must have some plans.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We're going to consult first, and develop the policies and plans second. What we want to do is identify people with an addiction to narcotics where that's a barrier to their being able to get off welfare and get a job and maintain a paid job. That's the preface of our remarks.

Chemical testing, for example, can only determine use; it cannot determine an addiction.

**Ms Martel:** That's right.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I've seen a number of screening instruments that have been used in jurisdictions, developed by medical teams and treatment experts and academic experts, that help identify someone with a dependency, someone with an addiction.

**Ms Martel:** What kind of testing or screening are you going to use to identify people? You just have people who come walking through the door in any number of offices across the province. How are you going to pick and choose who's going to be screened?

**Hon Mr Baird:** This is one of the issues on which we're going to consult. It is a leap in thinking to suggest

that there will be universal chemical testing. There are a number of screening instruments which have been identified as best practices in other jurisdictions. We certainly want to talk to those jurisdictions and talk to those treatment experts who developed those and try to find some format which would be part of a made-in-Ontario program.

I met with a group of caseworkers right here from Toronto the other day, and one of them told me that each and every day he sees someone come into his welfare office, Ontario Works office, who's high on drugs, who's intoxicated. Obviously it's a little bit easier in that case. Obviously it's a little bit easier if someone has got track marks up and down their arm. There are physical symptoms in some cases, but these instruments can help screen addiction. If someone wants to quarrel on whether they have an addiction—this goes to the second point—it can be put to rest very quickly, I would suggest, with another form of test. Those would be the issues we'd go and consult on.

**Ms Martel:** Let me ask you this. Is it going to apply solely to Ontario Works recipients or to Ontario Works and ODSP recipients?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's a fair question. I say two things: Ontario Works recipients. With respect to the Ontario disability support program, I think in general the answer is no. There are 250 people who have been grandfathered on to that program whose sole identified condition is a drug addiction. We want to talk to people on whether we should just simply write these people off or include them. I can tell you my personal view is that I think we probably should include them and offer that help. That's obviously one issue, but only those 250 people where drug addiction is their sole condition.

**Mr Fleming:** Could I just add something to the minister's earlier response about the whole issue of screening? As we go out and begin our consultation process and start to get into the whole matter of assessment and screening, well before any chemical tests one of the things we're going to want to talk to people in other jurisdictions with experience in this particular area about is around the requirements for training of staff who carry out these kinds of assessments. This is not an area, despite the kind of evidence the minister was referring to where something might appear to be indicative of drug addiction—there may be other people who have substance addictions where their appearances are not quite so obvious and yet are still constituting a barrier to employment. A part of what we're going to be interested in hearing about from other jurisdictions is their experience in training staff to see those kinds of behaviours that are barriers to employment.

**Ms Martel:** Outside of the ODSP, the 250 you've already indicated have an addiction problem now, are you going to be screening the current caseload or new applicants for OW?

**Hon Mr Baird:** OW? That will be one of the issues which we'll discuss in the consultations, so there's no decision there. I can't imagine conditions where it would just be new applicants. That decision hasn't been made,

but I can't imagine circumstances where we'd write off 216,000 or 217,000 people.

**Ms Martel:** Let me ask you this. Mr Norton has, in a press conference last October, expressed his concerns about this. I understand you have a letter from him with respect to this issue. Would you table that with this committee?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Sure. If you pick up today's Globe and Mail, I think it's quoted in there.

**Ms Martel:** I'm not sure if all of it's there, so if we could see the whole thing, that would be great.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll certainly look into that.

**Ms Martel:** You are going to be consulting with him directly?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes. I spoke with him yesterday and indicated we were not just willing to get together with him but that we wanted to work with his office.

**Ms Martel:** Let me ask you this. You specifically target a certain population in the province, but I've heard you say before that you're concerned about how drug use would impact upon anyone who's working. I'm assuming that means public and private. Why is it you are specifically targeting a particular group?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I am concerned about anyone where drug addiction is a barrier to employment. It seems to me it's just a good place to start, with those people who are unemployed.

**Ms Martel:** You could, though, I assume, pass a law that would make this applicable to employees in the private sector as well. But you're not doing that, correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** My mandate in social services is to help people move from welfare to work. That's my focus. If someone is in the private sector, they're obviously working, so it's not a barrier to employment, because they've got a job; they're employed.

**Ms Martel:** It might be a health and safety concern, though, for some of their co-workers.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I suppose that's an issue in employment law that comes out. There's a lot more experience in Canada on the employment law side of this equation than there is on the social assistance side.

**Ms Martel:** Are you going after this group in particular because they receive public funds as a means of support?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I disagree with your characterization that we're going after anyone.

**Ms Martel:** Are you going to make it mandatory for these individuals on social assistance to be tested because they are on social assistance and receiving public funds?

**Hon Mr Baird:** What we want to do is combat the challenge, combat the drug addiction of people where it's a barrier to employment. Those are folks on Ontario Works.

**Ms Martel:** Minister, are you not worried about the perception that has to exist, that you've targeted a particular group? You would have, I would think, drug problems in every sector of society, not just with respect to social assistance recipients. I don't know how rampant it is among social assistance recipients. I don't know how rampant it is in the rest of society.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm sort of counting on convincing you, that you'll correct the record.

**Ms Martel:** You're clearly going after a particular group and certainly giving the impression that somehow this group is much more likely to have addiction problems than others.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't think it's a leap to say that people who are unemployed and experiencing financial difficulties are more likely—I think there are folks with drug addictions in all backgrounds. I'd suggest over the years there have probably been a few members of the Legislature; there have probably been doctors, lawyers, business people, people inside and outside government in all occupations with a chemical dependency, with an addiction to a list of drugs and narcotics.

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Do I think someone who's on social assistance is any more likely to be in that condition? No, I don't. However, our focus is on people with a drug addiction where it's a barrier to their getting a job. I think people who don't have a job are probably substantially more likely to be included in that, because if you have a job, it's not really a barrier to your getting a job, if you already have one.

**Ms Martel:** This is a specific group of people whom you will perhaps, depending on the outcome of your discussion paper, specifically bar from receiving assistance.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, we're not going to specifically bar them. Everything in Ontario Works except this—every single part of Ontario Works is mandatory.

**Ms Martel:** Is drug testing going to be a condition for receipt of social assistance?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We're going to undertake the consultations. Obviously we've said in the past the treatment is mandatory. If there's a process in place that we can develop in terms of testing, obviously it'll be mandatory.

**Ms Martel:** You're not ruling out today that people could be barred from receiving social assistance?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Welfare, yes, I agree.

**Ms Martel:** Right. That's different than any other group in society. We don't bar anyone else from receiving an income. If they refuse to undergo mandatory drug testing, we don't bar anyone in the public sector who might have a job, anyone in the private sector, but you are considering barring these folks from receiving assistance if they don't undergo mandatory either testing or treatment, correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We bar people from welfare if they refuse to look for a job. We bar people from welfare if they refuse to take a community placement. We bar people from welfare if they refuse to provide certain information they're required to under the program. This is the only single part of Ontario Works, to the best of my knowledge, under regulation where we say, "You don't have to do this."

**Ms Martel:** But the human rights commissioner has said this is clearly a violation of the code. That's a difference, isn't it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** He has used words like "may" and "it appears." He hasn't seen the policy, because we haven't



developed it yet. We certainly indicated a willingness to sit down and talk to him, to talk to his staff and to try to work with them. I can't guarantee an end result that they'll sign off on it. We're certainly not adverse. We're certainly keen to proactively seek out their best advice.

**Ms Martel:** Do you have a discussion paper that you're going to be giving to those groups for them to consider?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No. There are five issues we want to talk about that were part of the announcement today.

**Ms Martel:** Are those public?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes.

**Ms Martel:** Can they be tabled with the committee as well? I saw the highlights on your release. I'm wondering if there's anything—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think those are the issues.

**Ms Martel:** That's what they'll be asked to respond to, those five issues?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't envisage any sort of travelling road show or three-ring circus. We're going to go out and talk to a lot of—I've already met with some caseworkers. I've already met with some law enforcement officials. We want to meet with people in other jurisdictions and learn what the best practices are. We want to talk to folks at the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Health. We want to invite input and suggestions. Here are five areas we want to discuss. I suspect we're going to get a lot of advice outside of those five areas, and that's welcome too.

**Ms Martel:** Would you table with the committee the list of people you intend to discuss this with?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm certainly happy to take that back. There may be some folks we're talking to who are recovering drug addicts who don't want their names tabled in the Ontario Legislature. I'm certainly happy to consider that.

**Ms Martel:** Fair enough. So you will do that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm certainly happy to consider it.

**Ms Martel:** That would be helpful.

I would like to ask some questions about Andersen Consulting. I saw the letter you sent back to Mr Peters after the negotiations were complete at the end of April. I have some questions with respect to your letter. Specifically, I see that the cap of \$180 million will remain in place. One of the auditor's concerns repeatedly has been how the ministry arrived at that cap as appropriate. I'd like to ask you why the cap of \$180 million is the figure that has been arrived at. What is the justification for it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think the auditor's concerns in that area are fair. I've said that in the past, and I'll say it again today. I accept the majority of his complaints and his concerns in that regard.

Having said that, we set out to renegotiate the contract with a number of objectives. Obviously one of the objectives wasn't, "Could Andersen please rip up the contract and let us start from scratch?" I think that would be unrealistic. Even the standing committee on public accounts, by resolution, rejected the idea of abrogating the deal and losing two or three years of momentum and

of time in this effort and said the best strategy was to renegotiate the contract.

My bottom line was that I wanted to see the project successfully completed. I wanted to see it successfully completed on time, successfully completed on budget and I wanted a substantial reduction in the rates.

**Ms Martel:** The question was, what's the justification for the cap of \$180 million?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think the auditor has criticized that there wasn't a justification. I don't think that has changed.

**Ms Martel:** You're saying there's no justification? How do you arrive at a figure of \$180 million and determine that's good value for the taxpayer?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The auditor made that complaint.

**Ms Martel:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Obviously Andersen doesn't get paid a dollar if the taxpayers don't save a dollar. That's what a common purpose procurement arrangement is all about. I think the contract probably would be very different—this is the first major common purpose procurement that the government has ever undertaken. In my judgment and in my opinion, the auditor made a number of very fair complaints and criticisms of the ministry in that regard. We've since done our very best to address all those issues which we're capable of addressing, and I think we've made good progress. I'm pleased to say the project has improved incredibly in the last year or two. At the end of the day, I think it's going to yield some excellent results for the taxpayers, some excellent results in the delivery of social assistance in the province.

**Ms Martel:** You still haven't answered the question, though.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I have. You just don't like the answer.

**Ms Martel:** No. The auditor was very specific that he was looking for some evidence as to why the ministry would agree that paying Andersen \$180 million was a legitimate amount of money to pay. He made that criticism in his first report and in his second. I see you have reaffirmed the original cap of \$180 million. I'm wondering if you have now been able to provide to the auditor some justification for arriving at that figure as a payment to Andersen.

**Hon Mr Baird:** My answers aren't going to be like a good bottle of wine; they're not going to get better with age. I've responded. You have the right not to accept my answer, but I've answered it twice.

**Ms Martel:** All right. The auditor was also critical of expenditures outside the cap, and I see those still exist as well. Can you tell me what eligible expenditures are still allowed outside of the \$180-million cap?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Sure. If I could give you a specific example, the \$180-million cap was for a certain set of—it's "up to." It's not necessarily \$180 million; it's up to \$180 million for them to do a certain number of things that are enumerated in the contract. There inevitably are things above and beyond that that were not contemplated



in the original contract, and I want to give you a specific example.

The Legislature passed legislation last year, last October, to implement the M. v. H. decision. Obviously that has a substantial effect on the delivery of social assistance in terms of the definition of "spouse," particularly "same-sex spouse" and the whole host of how that operates in terms of a benefit unit and the whole host of entitlements and requirements in the social assistance system. Therefore, we have to change all the software and the processes in order to reflect that new change that was not part of that initial order. I go back to that analogy of a kitchen. You build a kitchen. Halfway through the process you decide you'd like ceramic floors. Obviously they're not going to throw that in for the same cost they gave you. You're going to have to pay extra. So that change in the order—the M. v. H. decision—would be one example of something that is outside the cap.

**Ms Martel:** Does Andersen have to get prior approval of the ministry before they submit that and before you'll agree to pay?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes. We asked for it.

**Ms Martel:** That has been a change from the original contract because they didn't have to seek prior approval for expenditures outside the cap.

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got a minute, Ms Martel.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes, they have to get approval.

**Ms Martel:** Tell me about the billing rates that are now being charged. I think you told the committee last time you were here the billing rates have been decreased by 34%?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's 39.5%.

**Ms Martel:** Here's my concern. The auditor's concern was that the rates were actually 63% higher than the original quote Andersen gave at the time it got the contract. It looks like they're probably still about 29% higher than the original rates quoted. Is that correct?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, I don't believe it is, and we can invite officials from the ministry to come up and make that presentation. I think there is an honest difference of opinion. The auditor, if I'm not mistaken—from memory—looked at averages within certain categories that maybe didn't accurately reflect the rates. I'm happy to get someone up here to give you specific information on that because I think it's a reasonable question.

**Ms Martel:** What the auditor says—and I'll just quote it, "We noted that the rates charged by Andersen Consulting exceeded the rates quoted in its proposal by an average of 63% and can be increased by Andersen at any time without the approval of the ministry." Those were in his first two reports.

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**Hon Mr Baird:** Can we just take a moment and we'll get you that information? In the renegotiation I think we did a pretty good job. Is it perfect? No, but I think we did a pretty good job.

**The Vice-Chair:** If the response could be pretty short, and of course the next time—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Those are the good types of responses, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** Half a minute.

**Ms Bonnie Ewart:** Bonnie Ewart. Yes, the auditor did state a quote that said the rates went up 63%. When we renegotiated, we renegotiated back down to almost precisely the same amount as they were in this RFP document, which translates into 39.5%. It's just strictly the math. The rates are the same as they were to begin with. They are the same now as they were to begin with, but when you—how can I explain this? When you do an increase of \$50 to \$100, that's a 100% increase, but when you go backwards, your reduction is on a higher base, so your math is not going to be the same going backwards.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Ewart:** I can demonstrate it on paper.

**Ms Martel:** Send it to me after.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Stewart.

**Mr Stewart:** I want to go back to the treatment again, if I may, Minister. I'm not going to ramble quite as much as I did the last time. Probably there are those who would be pleased about that, but I do want to get on the record that in my riding of Peterborough we've had 4,356 fewer people on welfare than we had back in 1995, which I think just proves that with a strong economy and a new direction in social assistance it is definitely working.

Regarding the treatment, is alcohol going to be classed as a treatable drug? I don't know what the stats are, but I've certainly had folks in my office a number of times who have been under the influence of alcohol. Many of them will admit they abuse alcohol. I'm just wondering if it will be a treatable drug.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's something to which we've given a lot of thought and a lot of consideration. Obviously the whole motive is to try to provide help to people who face an addiction where that's a barrier to employment. I know of instances where alcohol is a chemical addiction where it is a barrier. I think that will be part of our consultations. I can tell you my own personal view is that it should be included. At the same time, though, we want to be realistic as far as the capacity of our program to respond to everything at once. I think you can have three—you can have an illegal drug, you could have alcohol and you can have even prescription drugs, which are often abused. We might want to, for example, phase it in in terms of those three types of areas, but that will be one of the things we consult on.

There's often a difference in terms of the definition of an addiction. There's a physiological or chemical addiction; you know, cocaine, heroin. There are other addictions which might be better characterized as habits. Even some illegal drugs have been characterized by some as being habits, for example, marijuana. Some characterize it as a chemical addiction; others characterize it as a habit addiction. That will be one of the things we want to do in talking to treatment experts.

I can tell you my own view is that we shouldn't simply write someone off who's an alcoholic. At the same time, I want to be realistic as far as the capacity of the system. One of the things we learned in our first term

was not to bite off more than we can chew. By all means bring in a lot of change, but just be cognizant of the demands on the system.

**Mr Stewart:** I'm pleased to hear that. As I said in the first time I made comments today, I can remember having a young fellow working for me and we eventually found out that he was an alcoholic. In the old days—not in my particular case, but if you came to work drunk or you did it consistently, you were gone. These days, of course, they class it as a medical condition in need of support. So I would hope it is considered with the consulting, and I compliment you on that, because I believe this is a contentious issue. I don't know why it is contentious, but it appears it could be, that you could get the information and the input you should have.

One thing that seems to have come up a bit in my riding in the last few weeks is the policy of putting liens on homes of welfare recipients. I know some people believe this is too harsh—I know it only happens when they've been on social assistance for a year. On the other hand there are those in this world who feel that once you're on social assistance it's your God-given right to be there forever. Needless to say, I don't believe that. Maybe you could give us an idea of the intent of the policy as well as the justification for it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I should say at the outset that this is not a new policy. It was passed as part of the Ontario Works Act. I concede that perhaps it was not being implemented by some or all consolidated municipal service managers. The program was proclaimed in 1998, and then by nature of the timelines on it, it came into effect a year later.

One of the challenges has been to design a welfare system that is two things. These are two premises on which our entire welfare system is based. It's a temporary program, and it's a program of last resort. This is a last-resort program, different from unemployment insurance, for example, which is not a program of last resort. The programs have different mandates and different functions.

Part of Ontario Works is that there are asset limits and requirements. We don't let someone apply for Ontario Works if they've got \$25,000 in the bank or a stock portfolio or if they have a \$25,000 car. They are not eligible. There is an alternative. They have an asset. Welfare is a program of last resort.

One of the challenges you have is people who own their own homes. For me, my home is my biggest investment, and for most middle-class working families in Ontario their principal residence is their biggest investment. At the same time, when someone falls on hard times economically, we don't want anyone to be forced out of their home based on economic circumstances, which by the nature of the program are temporary. So we've done two things.

For example, someone could own a \$100,000 townhouse—in Nepean you can buy a townhouse for \$100,000. If it is owned outright, a family on Ontario Works could easily afford to pay the condominium fee and the taxes and continue to live in that home. What

we're saying in terms of this policy change, this regulatory change, is that if you're on welfare for 10 or 11 months, it's not a problem. But if you're on welfare for longer than that, it would be somehow wrong for you to enjoy an increase in the value of your home. For example, that \$100,000 townhouse—and I'm familiar with one—is worth \$110,000 a year later. In my judgment it would be pretty ridiculous for someone to see an asset, the biggest investment in their life, appreciate by \$10,000, with no capital gains tax on that \$10,000 increase, at the same time they are on social assistance. In fact, in some cases it could actually be in excess of their social assistance benefit. They could actually earn more money from the increase in the value of their home in terms of a capital gain than from their income flow from Ontario Works.

What we have said is that when you go on the program you have to consent to a lien being placed on your home after 12 months, and you would pay back your welfare costs whenever you sold that home. So if you are on welfare for two years, for example, after you've been on welfare for a year, a lien would go on your home, and whenever you sold that home, in five, 10 or 25 years, the taxpayers would get their money back. Not one single person would be forced out of their home as a result of the policy, but at the same time it would recognize that the poor, working-class individual living in the townhouse next door who is renting, who can't afford the down payment to buy a home, shouldn't be paying for your welfare cheque while you are realizing a capital gain. Using that same example, someone should not be on social assistance paying off their mortgage, where you would have the person renting next door essentially helping you pay off the principal on your mortgage.

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I appreciate there is concern and disagreement about this policy. We're particularly sympathetic in rural Ontario. If you're in Bancroft or Oxford Mills or Spencerville and own your own home, it might be cheaper and better economically to stay in that owned accommodation rather than renting, which may or may not be available and, if it is, may even be more money than owning.

I think it's a very pro-middle-class policy that we don't ask people on welfare to have their next-door neighbour who is renting pay off their home or help them realize capital gains. I appreciate there will be an honest difference of opinion on that, but it's a policy I wholeheartedly support.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I want to talk about an area of your ministry that you were asked many questions about in the Legislature earlier in the year—and I believe Ontario is the only province where it falls under your ministry—that is, youth detention centres. You were asked many questions, but often in the Legislature you are given a limited amount of time to respond. Can you tell us how many youth detention centres your ministry is responsible for, how many of those were operated by social



agencies in the past, such as the Salvation Army, as many have been through different governments, and the few you recently turned over to other agencies to operate? Just give us a breakdown over the years, and certainly have one of your deputy ministers—

**Hon Mr Baird:** The ministry, as you know, is responsible for young offenders between the ages of 12 and 15. I think we currently have about 104 young offenders' facilities for those 12- to 15-year-olds, in just about every region of Ontario.

When I came to the ministry 18 months ago, I believe 99 of the 105 were operated by outside agencies: in many cases non-profit agencies and in some cases private sector operators. The experience of the ministry was fairly positive in that. It was a policy that was followed by the NDP government and the Liberal government. It wasn't a new policy or a radical change from the status quo that had been going on for 10 or 20 years.

For the last five facilities, we did seek community-based operators. I'm referring to the Genest centre in London, the Syl Apps facility in Oakville, the York Detention Centre in the city of Toronto, Project DARE in the Parry Sound-Muskoka area and, I believe, one in Sault Ste Marie. Those were the five. The ministry has had a good experience with those operators. From time to time, there are problems, just as there are with facilities directly operated by the ministry. But by and large I think it's been a good experience.

I can give you an example of one that was passed on to a community operator in my own community before I became the minister. The William Haye centre in Ottawa used to be directly operated by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Today it's operated by the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton, an agency with a long history of providing supports to young people in our community, very well regarded in the community and with a good track record. To date I think they're doing a pretty good job operating it, obviously with ministry standards and ministry supervision.

**Mr Mazzilli:** If I could move on to something else, earlier this year you, along with your ministry, were responsible for some changes to the Child and Family Services Act. Can you or someone from your ministry explain what those changes were intended to achieve?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We've undertaken a reform agenda within the area of children's aid societies, child welfare and child protection. The major part of that was the amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. Actually that was passed in the year leading up to your election. We've seen an 80%—

*The division bells rang.*

**The Vice-Chair:** We have about two more minutes left. You can use that tomorrow. We have to go for a vote now.

The committee is adjourned until tomorrow at 3:30.

*The committee adjourned at 1746.*



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Research and Information Services

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 November 2000

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 15 novembre 2000

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Community  
and Social Services

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Services sociaux  
et communautaires



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 15 November 2000

Mercredi 15 novembre 2000

*The committee met at 1531 in room 228.*MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy):** I call the meeting to order. We are continuing with the review of the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I understand we're at the rotation for the official opposition. You have 20 minutes, and I guess we're beginning with Ms Dombrowsky.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** My question to the minister is with regard to directive number 29, which outlines the provisions for temporary care assistance. What I would like the minister to define for us this afternoon is "temporary care." Can you assign a period of time to "temporary care"?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Are you talking about developmental disabilities, children's services, CASs, young offenders?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Foster care.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Perhaps you could provide—we deal with about 1.5 million clients.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** OK. When application is made for temporary care support, some jurisdictions interpret "temporary care" to be a period of six months and others a full year, while other jurisdictions await some direction on that from your ministry. I was wondering if you would be able to clarify today, for the purposes of providing benefits to caregivers, how long "temporary care" is.

**Hon Mr Baird:** When you say "jurisdictions," do you mean a county or a children's aid society?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I have three counties in my riding, and each county has chosen a different interpretation in terms of the timeline for temporary care. What is "temporary"?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm afraid you'll have to give me more details. I'm not following the question.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I was hoping you'd be able to provide me with the detail in terms of "temporary" under directive 29.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm not going to debate with you. I'm saying I don't understand your question. I can either say "I don't understand" or "I can't give you an answer." If you give me more information, I could try to do my best

to answer or one of the assistant deputy ministers. You're talking about directive 29 of what?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** "This directive explains the circumstances under which temporary care assistance shall be paid."

**Hon Mr Baird:** I can't provide you with the answer. If you could tell me the directive of what, I'd be happy to look into it. You're speaking in code.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** It was "formerly foster parent allowance."

**Hon Mr Baird:** Directive of what?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** For temporary care assistance.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Maybe you could table with the committee what you're talking about. I don't know what you're talking about. I'm sorry.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** This is a ministry document.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If you table the document, we'd be happy to look into it for you.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** OK. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The clerk will be happy to make copies of the documentation.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Would that be coming to me in writing?

**Hon Mr Baird:** You're speaking code, and I don't understand. We'll have to look at it and certainly get it to you in short order, whether that's a couple of minutes, a couple of hours, a couple of days or a couple of weeks. I don't know what directive you're referring to. I've got eight assistant deputy ministers behind me who don't know what you're talking about either.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** This is a term in the Ontario Works legislation under directive 29.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's what I asked you four times and you didn't tell me. I'm not going to play games. We'll look into it and get you an answer as soon as we possibly can.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I said it before.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I didn't hear you.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Read the Hansard.

**The Chair:** Ms Di Cocco.

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** My question has to do with the funding for services to persons with developmental disabilities. You had a meeting, I believe at the end of last month, with the tri-counties—Chatham-Kent, Windsor-Essex and Sarnia-Lambton—in my constituency. When it came to funding for the developmentally disabled, the agencies in Sarnia-Lambton—

the Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped, the Samia and District Association for Community Living, the St Francis Advocates Inc and the Christian Horizons—have restructured and come together and, under the criteria you set out, requested \$2.7 million. They only got \$106,000. The funding is so small, particularly to aging parents with children. I'm just wondering if you're going to address the disparity between the need that area has and the actual funding you allotted them.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think this goes to the issue of how the new funding for people with developmental disabilities was distributed, which I'm happy to discuss with you. As you know, \$50 million was announced this year. Part of it went to support special services at home, and part of it went for fire code upgrades, which would depend dramatically, region by region, on which agencies had requirements for fire code upgrades. Some of it went in terms of baseline monies for wages in the sector. Some, in terms of residential bed capacity, was distributed in a formula as follows.

We looked at three things. We looked at the incidence, the number of people and the prevalence of a developmental disability within that region—our ministry has nine separate regions. So (1) we looked at the number of people with a developmental disability in that region, (2) we looked at the current population of that region, and (3) we looked at the expected growth in that region. The third one was only 10%, a rather small amount of the money. I'll follow up, because I want to give you a specific answer. It's not an unreasonable question.

In my judgment, there is a tremendous inequity across the province in the distribution of our supports to community living. For some time, some areas have got more than their population might otherwise justify. One area is southwestern Ontario, another area would be the Hamilton-Niagara region and another would be northern Ontario. On a per capita basis we would spend substantially more in those parts of the province than we would in other areas of the province; for example, the GTA, the 905 area. The city of Toronto doesn't get the amount of resources it might expect. It has 24% of the population.

Developmental disability is not substantially based on geography. There's not any more likelihood to be a higher prevalence in one part of the province organically, if I could say. There might be, depending on the way residential patterns for institutions have been based. For example, in Ottawa-Carleton, Renfrew county, Stormont-Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott-Russell, there was less than they might otherwise suggest. That meant there was a historical inequity.

What we sought to do with the additional funding for residential supports for people with developmental disabilities as part of that \$50-million announcement—was it \$18 million or \$24 million? Twenty-four million dollars of the \$50 million was divided up that way. We sought to help tackle that historical inequity to try to compensate a bit more in those areas which had been underfunded for five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 years. Like I said, the city of Toronto was one, eastern Ontario—Renfrew

county, Prescott-Russell—was another. The areas around the city of Toronto in terms of the suburbs was a third area which just had substantially less, and that's always a difficult challenge to do. Do you say to some people who had historically got a lot less funding that "If we get a new dollar, we'll spread it around equally," or will we try to address past shortcomings?

**1540**

**Ms Di Cocco:** The problem there is the fact that apparently it's approximately 17% of the province's need when it comes to the developmentally disabled. I understand that's the demographics of that area. Certainly, if you're saying that you are cutting up the pie, if you want, and trying to equalize it, in their opinion—and these are the people who service these people—they are saying that unfortunately they feel they really got the short end of the stick down there. I just would like to see you, in your capacity, address that. As you know, you're going to have an awful lot of cards coming to you from people from that whole region. The fact is that it isn't meeting the current needs and the needs of the aging parents of people who are developmentally disabled. They are saying they have a real crisis on their hands. I understand your problem, but they're saying they are not getting their share.

**Hon Mr Baird:** They certainly didn't get a proportionate share of this part of the announcement. We did try to deal with some of the historical inequities. For example, people in the city of Toronto could have rightfully said, "We just want the same per capita funding as you give southwestern Ontario: nothing more, nothing less." That was a concern, I appreciate, in this announcement. Obviously if it had gone around equally, it would have been spread more equally. You do point out the need for more supports for people with developmental disabilities. I agree. I met with the folks from your constituency and am certainly committed to—

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** Can I do a quick follow-up, Minister, on this same issue? Is not part of the problem also that the new fund—there are some new initiatives involved and you're asking for new child-intensive initiatives. There are some new initiatives. So it seems to me that part of the problem is that despite what you've said, you're still asking them to do new initiatives which the organizations that are being funded on a much lower basis are still expected to do, but they can't really do it. Their resources are very tight, so those like Thunder Bay and—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Could you name one, just so I could—

**Mr Gravelle:** No, I'm asking you if that's the case; if, for example, there are new initiatives you're asking them to do as part of that funding and the organizations that are being underfunded are also being expected to do them. If that's the case, the underfunding is a bigger problem.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The new initiatives—for example, a new program which started this year called Foundations to try and support day programming for folks leaving the school system, primarily young people between 18 and



21-plus who are leaving or have left the school system. That's being done on a proposal basis. People submit a proposal and we would approve it. No one is expected to undertake that without funding, so there's certainly no expectation there.

I haven't heard any complaints with respect to the fire code monies. If there are, I'd welcome them. There might be geographically some areas which weren't meeting the fire code more than others; in my judgment, more of the funds should go there. If there's no one in the city of Toronto who has a fire code problem, they obviously shouldn't get any money for fire code.

But if there is a specific instance where people, as part of these new programs, as part of that \$50 million, have increased expectations but there isn't funding, I'd certainly be aware of them; I'd certainly like to receive them and I'd look into them. There's no intention to do that, so if there's an area, we certainly would look into it.

**Ms Di Cocco:** St Clair Child and Youth Services in Sarnia-Lambton provides services to about 700 clients, child/family, per year, and 300 or 400 child/family contacts that they service. They began the intensive treatment service in school and home to strengthen and improve their system, and they were really shocked when they found out it was only a one-time fiscal allocation of \$100,000. I've submitted a letter to you, because maybe it's a mistake; other services of this genre across the province have gotten annualized funding. So they don't understand why they have gotten this one-time funding. They've already started the program and they're going to have to cut it in March next year if they don't get some kind of commitment to the annualized funding.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's intensive services—

**Ms Di Cocco:** Yes, it is.

**Hon Mr Baird:** For?

**Ms Di Cocco:** Child and family intervention services. They are working with very critical areas at school and in the community.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Is it autistic services? Is it child protection, child welfare services, disability?

**Ms Di Cocco:** It's intensive intervention for youth and children. My understanding is that it works with prevention, kids who are at risk when it comes to getting involved with the law and getting into trouble, before they're incarcerated. So there's family intervention there.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm trying to compartmentalize it. Is it children's mental health or child welfare?

**Ms Di Cocco:** Mental health.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Children's mental health?

**Ms Di Cocco:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The deputy minister may be able to address it, because it sounds like a fair concern.

**The Chair:** Leona, do you want to ask one more quick question?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Minister, I'm going to try this one more time, because I have a document with your signature—

**The Chair:** Sorry, are you going to answer that question?

**Ms Jessica Hill:** Yes, I was about to. My name is Jessica Hill, and I'm with the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

In the southwest region, there were a number of initiatives funded under the children's mental health initiative. Particularly, we responded to some crises in the Windsor-Essex area in terms of stabilizing the crisis intervention services and the hospital community programming. There was an effort to support the St Clair Youth Services, and it is I think well-acknowledged and understood by the agency that it was one-time funding. They recognize that it's not a long-term solution, that there also is planning in the whole region around how to ensure that the services are working in the best way possible. So it is true that it is one-time funding at this time, but it is being discussed with the regional office and being looked at.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Is that—

**Ms Di Cocco:** As I said, they're looking for the long-term funding, and it was their understanding that it was long-term funding.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It was? OK.

**Ms Di Cocco:** That it was going to be changed to long-term funding. So that's what the problem is.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll certainly look into it and review the issue.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I have a document dated September 25, 2000. It's an answer for an order question that I asked: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services indicate whether or not his ministry has cut support benefits for those providing non-custodial foster care?" In your answer, Minister, the document which you signed, these are your words, "Temporary care assistance, formerly known as the foster allowance under the former family benefits and general welfare assistance program, has not been reduced."

My question is with regard to your reference to temporary care assistance. What is the time frame that your ministry considers temporary?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I can call someone up now. I wasn't sure of whether you were talking about the Child and Family Services Act, children's mental health, Ontario Works, the foster care plan. You were being very coded, and it was very difficult for us to understand. But I'll have Barry Whalen, our assistant deputy minister, answer.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Thank you.

**Mr Barry Whalen:** I would like to just double-check, but to my knowledge there is no time period that the temporary assistance can be provided. It would depend on the individual circumstances of the family.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** That would be interpreted by the—

**Mr Whalen:** Ontario Works deliverers, the municipality.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** The local social service.

**Mr Whalen:** Right.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Thank you.

**Mr Gravelle:** Minister, if I may go back to the developmental services sector again, you've certainly in your opening remarks and on other occasions spoken about the



importance of this to your ministry. You talk about the extra funding that you've put forward, and I think that's appreciated, but you've also acknowledged that one of the most significant challenges facing the agencies which deliver these services is in the area of human resources. Obviously, ultimately organizations need to pay their staff an appropriate salary in order to keep them. We know, and I'm sure you do as well, that right now developmental services sector organizations across the whole spectrum are falling behind. They're losing staff, there's a tremendous upheaval in terms of staff going, and obviously in order for the system to work that infrastructure has to be maintained. So they are suffering very clearly from a wage disparity.

Having said that, the question I'm asking is, why does your government adopt basically a 2% salary increase for the broader public service sector—2% as a barrier—yet you provided social service agencies with the resources to only budget—I think it was—0.8%, less than a 1% increase for their staff? That strikes me as being a double standard, and it certainly seems to be something that doesn't match your commitment to see that the sector is properly supported, because obviously that won't keep the staff.

1550

**Hon Mr Baird:** For social service agencies within the ministry I think it was 1% and 1.5%. If you have a specific example that would be contrary to that, I'd certainly look into it.

In the developmental services sector, the folks for nine years working in that area I think got zero, so 1% and 1.5% is certainly substantially better than that. I'm the first to acknowledge that it's a very small recognition, that we've got to do more. As part of our developmental services reform and the consultations we've had, it has certainly been identified as a major issue from both the Association for Community Living and community agencies across the province. I have met on a number of occasions with CUPE and on one occasion with Sid Ryan. He strongly raised it. So you have both the employers and representatives of employees—

**Mr Gravelle:** What would you support then, at least 2%?

**Hon Mr Baird:** To the best of my knowledge, there was no differential in the sector; it was 1% and 1.5%. Would I have liked to have gotten more? Yes. I guess there was a balance. When we went forward with that request, at the same time we were asking for \$6 million to start Foundations, we were asking for \$7 million for fire code, we were asking for \$24 million for residential support, we were asking for more money for respite care. So it was a challenge. Do I support increasing the budget for wages? Yes. That's part of our reforms. Would I like to see a big increase there? Yes.

**Mr Gravelle:** Staff issues are huge, as you know, and that doesn't even address—do I have any time?

**The Chair:** Thirty seconds.

**Mr Gravelle:**—pay equity. What are the outstanding pay equity obligations, as you understand them, in terms

of your transfer agency partners? What are the pay equity obligations? That's another huge issue, obviously.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It depends on agency by agency, but there has been no change in provincial policy since, I believe, 1996 on that issue. It was capped at \$500 million.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** I appreciate the opportunity to sub in for my colleague Shelley Martel and to ask you a few questions today. I always appreciate it when there's a minister who knows his brief and knows his detail and has good staff backing him up. I also have to say that I appreciate, when at times I've brought specific problems, your willingness to look at them and take action, like the crisis in mental health in southwestern Ontario and in Windsor-Essex. I really appreciate that kind of response. Now that I've buttered you up—

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's always the part I fear the most.

**Ms Lankin:** You won't be surprised to know that I am here today to speak to you about issues with respect to anti-violence against women initiatives that your ministry is responsible for and also your role in the cross-ministerial strategy that the government has.

I'm aware of the announcement, for example, that stems from the budget announcement of the \$10 million, the \$5 million for the child witness program and the other \$5 million for transition supports. It's hard for me in particular, because I spend most of my time looking at health estimates, to understand the Comsoc estimates, to see exactly where those initiatives, not just the \$10 million but any other initiatives that you may have further investments in with respect to anti-violence strategies, appear in the ministry's estimates book.

On page 32, which sets out the general description of adults' and children's services program, in the objectives of that program area it talks about residential and non-residential community services to enable female victims of violence—and then it talks about other target groups in the community who are also aided by assistance there. Could you give me, first of all, the specific reference in the estimates book, the budget vote item, that contains anti-violence initiatives so I know where we're talking about it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Page 75.

**Ms Lankin:** Maybe you can direct me to the actual vote item, just a brief description.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That would be vote 702, item 4.

**Ms Lankin:** The brief description in terms of the change in the estimates in violence against women, the 16% increase, can you tell me what that amount—

**Hon Mr Baird:** If you look at it, there are two budget initiatives: the transitional support program for women and children and the budget initiative for the child witness of domestic violence intervention program, each of \$5 million. In terms of wage pressures, there is obviously \$644,700 and some internal transfers of \$474,700.

**Ms Lankin:** Which page are you actually looking at now? That's not on page 75, is it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's my explanation.

**Ms Lankin:** So the wage pressures would be in the area on page 75 described as "broader public sector—other grants"?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, that would be the \$999,900. If you noticed, on page 75 it says \$10,999,900. The \$10 million itself is the new budget initiative and the remainder is the wage pressure issue.

**Ms Lankin:** Is there any other area in the ministry's budget that is specifically designated to anti-violence initiatives, or is this the key area that we would be talking about?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Obviously, within the ministry we do some training initiatives. We fund 98 shelters. Through the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, there's an initiative there.

**Ms Lankin:** Have there been major increases in any of those budget lines that I should be aware of before I start asking you questions?

**Hon Mr Baird:** This year, no. The aboriginal healing and wellness strategy obviously was renewed five years, the first Blueprint commitment we fulfilled in our ministry. But the major part was the wage issue and the two \$5-million programs.

**Ms Lankin:** It is a strategy that I'm aware of from prior to 1995.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's why I said "renewed," because it was a great program.

**Ms Lankin:** Good, we agree on something.

The budget initiative of \$10 million—and let me say any investment in this area is something that I will support, while I am critical of areas there has not been movement on. That initiative, split \$5 million and \$5 million, is set up in an interesting way. It's allocated out to existing transfer payment agencies. It's on a regional basis, as I understand, nine regions in the province. Groups have been brought together to try and determine how that money would be allocated, particularly money in terms of the counselling positions, which agencies they would be in. Not necessarily shelters—in one case the Salvation Army, I think, is one of the service deliverers. The one thing I'm unclear about—I may not be right in this assertion—is that my understanding is the money is annualized to the region but not necessarily annualized to the organizational budget. Is that an accurate description, or can you clarify for me if I'm incorrect?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's certainly annualized. The \$10 million representing the two \$5-million programs is certainly added to base. I can get you a specific answer.

**Ms Lankin:** I understand that.

**Ms Hill:** I think that the process was to select a lead agency and to allocate the funding there. We would check whether that's going to be incorporated into the lead agency's service contract on a permanent basis. What I would speculate, what I need to confirm with the regions, is whether they're leaving some flexibility just to ensure that the lead agency is delivering to the rest of the system the services that they've agreed to provide, so in a sense waiting a year to see if it's working through.

**Ms Lankin:** So the intent is not that it would be project money that's renewable; that in fact it would be annualized into that agency's budget as long as it meets the demands of the service contract.

**1600**

**Ms Hill:** Right, but I think the subtlety really has to do with their responsibility to the other service providers, in that they're playing a role on behalf of a number of agencies. So there may be some need to just ensure that they've picked the right lead agency. But I can confirm that.

**Ms Lankin:** I'd appreciate some clarity on that. I think there is some misunderstanding in the community itself, just about what the future holds—not whether that money will be there or not but how agencies will continue to—

**Hon Mr Baird:** And that can cause nervousness and uncertainty for staff. Just so you know, there's no motivation there for that. Obviously with a new program there are certain expectations where you want the intent followed through.

**Ms Lankin:** That money is being divided equally between two programs, the child witness of domestic violence program, and transitional support for abused women and their children. Again, as I said, I would certainly support any initiative on this front.

The first area I want to talk to you about, though, which is right now a key responsibility of your ministry, are the services provided through women's emergency shelters. I know there has been work within the ministry, and people have been looking at whether or not there is deemed to be a need to expand shelter services. There has been some dispute about the rate of utilization of shelter beds, for example. I will be the first one to admit that it's very difficult to get a good handle on what's happening out in the community even through their association, which has a lot of hard numbers that we have available to work on.

In a previous conversation with you, Minister, you asked me to take a look at the issue of utilization and where the pressures were and what I could find out; again, let me admit, anecdotal information, and I'm hoping over this period of time that you might have some harder numbers. The assaulted women's help lines: the number of calls, the frequency of calls, the volume of calls and the proportion of those calls seeking direct information about shelter placements, finding space in shelters, have increased over the last year and continue to be at a very high level.

Over the summer, with the tragic incidents that took place, there were specific reports about York region and the growing pressures in York region and the shelters there not being able to meet the need; in fact, turning women away. In Pickering, following the tragic murder of Gillian Hadley, there were reports that there were specific women in Pickering who had been working on trying to establish a new shelter and getting support from the ministry and having been unable to do that. The friends of Gillian Hadley who have spoken out have indicated that one of her problems was that there was no



shelter in Pickering, there was no place to go. To go over to another community meant disrupting her children, taking them from school, and that was a real problem.

In London, I know that in one of the meetings the ministry held with people from the community in talking about the allocation of the \$10 million there was discussion that these two initiatives were of a bit higher priority in that it would be nice if it was expressed that there wasn't the immediate need for more shelter beds and that this money was actually going to be meeting a higher priority need, and the response of the women from London at that meeting was that there was in fact a need for more shelter beds in London, that they were turning people away.

There's a group of aboriginal women in Ottawa we have spoken to who are trying to get a shelter for aboriginal women there because there are no specific services and because the Ottawa shelters have indicated and communicated to them that they are full and are turning people away.

In your own home community you may well have talked with people at Nelson House—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Not recently.

**Ms Lankin:** —and might have some sense of the trouble they've had from time to time. I'm sure you would have.

In Toronto and in Bowmanville, shelters like Redwood and Bethesda currently have no contract for operation funds from the ministry, so they're fundraising. They are operating without being ministry shelters, in that sense. They are meeting a need and are turning people away.

The most recent hard numbers that I was able to come across—even then they're not hard numbers—were in the Falling through the Gender Gap report, released in 1998, which OAITH researched and in which they talked about the demands on shelter services rising, and particularly the information they were getting through the crisis lines.

I don't have any better information than that and I don't have a way of getting better information than that, but all of that, and speaking to women on the front lines across the province, leads me to believe that there is a pressure. There's a pressure both for more beds in some areas and for shelters where no shelters exist in some areas.

What have you been able to ascertain over this last period of time when we've both engaged in looking at this issue, and what plans do you have to meet the needs that you've identified?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's certainly something which I'm engaged in. It is a challenge when looking at the occupancy rates of shelters, because they can't tell the whole story. Some may, for example, be only 85% full in a year, but 10 months of the year they could be turning people away. So I've asked for more information. I have been engaged in it since we spoke about three or four weeks ago.

I can tell you, for example, that in the city of Toronto, which is not a high-growth area, I've certainly heard the concern and the question, do we have enough capacity,

enough beds there? When women are seeking to leave a violent relationship, do we have enough capacity? All 12 of the 12 shelters in Toronto have occupancy rates of over 80%. Seven of the 12, I understand, have occupancy rates of over 90%, but I—

**Ms Lankin:** Could I just add to that, Minister, that the last stats I saw showed that there were over 300 women plus their children in emergency housing shelters—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I've heard that from Councillor Brad Duguid—

**Ms Lankin:** —who don't get any sort of counselling supports or the other supports.

**Hon Mr Baird:** —and from the social services and housing folks at the city of Toronto. Seven to 12 shelters over 90% is certainly something I'm continuing to work on. We go through our budget process, as I'm sure you're familiar with. If there's a need, we can—

**Ms Lankin:** But, Minister, can we start from a premise that even in, let's say, Toronto, or we can go community by community, you have identified already a real, pressing need?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The concern I have—that is the information I have, and I don't want to present myself as the expert in this area. I want to be clear on that. I'm just going by the information I have, that seven of the 12 shelters are at over 90%. What I'd like to be able to see is, are there seven of the 12 months where there's a hugely higher occupancy rate problem which would more than justify an expansion of the system? What is the nature of the use of the hostel space?

In some communities without a shelter, for example—I think of a formal shelter as being one of the 98 shelters funded by the ministry. I think of Bethesda House in Durham region that obviously gets substantial modes of funding from the province through the \$34.50 per diem. So it would be a mistake to say that there's no funding going to—you can talk about the adequacy—

**Ms Lankin:** There's no operational grant.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You can talk about the adequacy, though, of the services provided there.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, sorry. There are other issues I want to get to.

On this one, clearly it's going to take an effort to pull together the information so you can convince yourself and then take forward a proposal to convince cabinet in the budgeting process.

In the May-Iles jury recommendations, followed up in the joint committee report, and May-Iles is over two years now, there's a specific recommendation to undertake a review of shelter funding, a formal review of shelter funding. Not ad hoc; not trying to get some information to get a sense of it and now needing to go back and look at monthly and what does that mean? Let's sort of cut to the chase here. Will you empower your staff, direct your staff, to commence working with OAITH and with the 98 shelters and the other informal or outside the formal provision of the 98 shelters who are giving care? Will you direct a formal funding review so that you have the information to make a decision about your submission to the budgeting process this year?



**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm certainly not in a position to do that here today. I am saying that the issue is one that's of concern to me. It's one which we have been engaged with the officials in the ministry on. It's one which consistently, since I arrived at the ministry, I've identified as a priority. It's one with which, as I've said to you on previous occasions, I'm certainly happy to work with you. I'm certainly happy to work with advocates in this sector to get a better understanding of the capacity.

**Ms Lankin:** May I ask what the hesitation is? What's the hesitation about doing the formal review? I mean, it's a May-Iles jury recommendation. It's grounded in good work out there.

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**Hon Mr Baird:** I think a formal review would mean one thing to one person and one to another. I don't know whether I would want to create a false expectation that there will be some royal commission established to look into this. Senior officials within the ministry see this as a priority. We're engaged in looking into it. I've talked to my colleagues the Attorney General and the minister for women's issues, and we're going to be meeting next week with a cross-sectoral group. This is obviously one of the most substantial parts. I would say it's one of the more meaningful submissions they've made to government. It's one with which I have no hesitation to meet with.

**Ms Lankin:** Could I ask you to provide me with the data you have collected so far with respect to utilization and occupancy rates of shelters and whatever information you're able to collect as you continue to look at this so we have an equal basis of information to continue to discuss where we head with shelter funding and the expansion of shelter funding in the future.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Sure.

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate that.

I want to turn next to the issue of crisis helplines. You know of course that the Toronto crisis helpline has continuously been making the point over the last two years that there is a need for their service to be expanded province-wide, that they do receive calls from other parts of the province. There are times when the lines are jammed. They don't have enough telephone lines or enough counsellors to provide the supports that are there. You will also be aware—they've been calling for it for two years—that they actually submitted a formal proposal to you some five months ago. What is the status of the review of that proposal? What are your views with respect to their request?

**The Chair:** Very briefly please, Minister.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's one of the issues in looking at the recommendations coming from that cross-sectoral committee of 95 groups, is it?

**Ms Lankin:** It's about 125 now. It's growing.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's growing. It was 95 then.

**Ms Lankin:** You'd better act quickly.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There are a lot of recommendations they're making—

**Ms Lankin:** This is a proposal that has been before you for five months.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes—which are unrealistic. This has been a concern that has been expressed and it's certainly one with the shelter capacity and shelter numbers that I have no hesitation to look at. As far as the specific one five months ago, on that issue—

**The Chair:** Sorry, Minister. We'll have to maybe continue this in the next round.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll have an hour to get it for you.

**Ms Lankin:** Forty minutes.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Forty minutes; sorry.

**The Chair:** I now turn to the government caucus and to Mr Wettlaufer.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I'd like to get on the record that in Kitchener Centre, in my riding, this year on April 1 we opened the children's mental health access centre in downtown Kitchener to provide service to families in the Waterloo region. What this does is streamline access to services for children and youth and their families. It provides a single, consolidated intake process for treatment and support services, and they will be provided by Lutherwood CODA and Notre Dame of St Agatha Children's Centre, which are major children's mental health service providers that you fund through your ministry—not personally but through your ministry.

In addition, the access centre houses the local inter-agency wraparound service and a single point of access to children's mental health residential services. The model for the centre was developed and recommended to the ministry through a consultation process that we undertook as part of the Making Services Work for People initiative. Collaboration with a number of local children and youth organizations is putting the concept into action.

Walter Mittelstaedt, who is the director of treatment programs at Lutherwood CODA, said:

"We are delighted to have the opportunity to expand intensive home-based services here in Waterloo region, because this service approach is increasingly being recognized across North America. The focus is to provide practical, effective home- and community-based help and to reduce the need for institutional and residential placements. With this new funding, we will be able to get involved earlier with families and reduce waiting lists."

Sonia Pouyat is with kidsLINK. She said:

"Access services are important and we need to ensure that the services families need are available. The access centre will provide a good point for assessing family needs and delivering or arranging services."

Supports for families with children experiencing mental health difficulties are expanding in Kitchener-Waterloo and across the province, but particularly in Kitchener-Waterloo. That's the area that I'm interested in. They're expanding because of the government's announcement in April this year of \$20 million in new funding for children's mental health.

The second-largest increase in the ministry's estimates comes under children's funding, an increase in the amount of \$37.8 million, which is a relatively significant

increase. Is the announcement made in April in the area of children's mental health, in the amount of \$20 million, part of this \$37.8 million? If not, how does your ministry plan to spend this money, this total of \$37.8 million? If it is part of it, how do you plan on spending the other \$17.8 million?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I can answer two parts and then I'll get the answer to the third part in a moment.

The first was \$20 million: that was \$10 million, rising to \$20 million, to expand and support children's mental health services. That will bring the budget for our children's mental health system in terms of our ministry to about \$296 million, which is more than any government has spent in our history. There was a review done on children's mental health by our colleague Margaret Marland, the minister responsible for children's issues, prior to my tenure at the ministry, so we've been able to benefit greatly from that effort. She did a tremendous amount of consultation around the province and was able to talk to a lot of service providers, a lot of staff and leadership within that sector, parents, families, professionals, and there was a substantial amount of support providing that new funding.

The second area of that funding was in terms of increasing wages, in terms of the \$37 million.

The third part was the autism initiative. As you recall, in the budget on May 5, 1999, the government announced its intention to introduce an autism program, intensive intervention for two- to five-year-olds with autism in the budget. This has been a rather large effort because we really had such limited, close to none, capacity to provide those services in Ontario. This initiative resulted when the Autism Society Ontario and Trevor Williams, who was formerly with that organization, came forward in the pre-budget consultations in 1999 and made a very excellent presentation. It was one of the few examples where I've seen—well, not few but not enough examples—someone in the social services sector coming in and making a business case for support, that if you make an investment in children, particularly at that early age, in the early years, in this area, in that type of therapy which has proven to be so more successful with the malleability of a young child's mind between the ages of two and five, it can make a gigantic difference in terms of that child's development. That money I think rises to \$19 million a year.

The big challenge in that area has been that the parents who could afford it would bring in therapists or have folks from Ontario trained, some in New Jersey and other parts of the United States, flown up here or trained down there. Some who couldn't afford it went into debt and begged, borrowed and stole whatever they could to build private help for their children. But with this new program, what we've had to do is undertake a huge training initiative to be able to build capacity here within the province. We've continued to work closely with the Autism Society of Ontario. The training has been going very well in the past three or four months. The rubber is finally beginning to meet the road in the last number of

months and children are beginning to be able to get that therapy.

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It has been a slow process, slower than I would have liked, but it will be well worth the time we've taken to get it right. I think the Autism Society of Ontario has been supportive of that effort to build a made-in-Ontario delivery mechanism. We can be very proud in Ontario to be the first province to introduce this type of program and I quite frankly am surprised this wasn't done 25 years ago. It's a good initiative.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** Thank you, Minister. Before I get to my question, I happen to be sitting reading a fact sheet. Yesterday we discussed a lot about drug treatment and fraud etc. I certainly had the opinion from those opposite that this drug treatment program was the first that anybody in the history of the world had ever done. Certainly we are the first in Canada, and I applaud us for that. I sometimes wonder where the rest of the provinces and indeed the federal government have been for the last good number of years.

But when I read this sheet that I have, it's interesting to note that a number of states in the United States have programs, programs mainly designed for treatment. If you look at places like Oregon, their welfare program focuses on addiction that is a barrier to employment and participation in the job opportunity and basic skills program. In their screening process they'll standardize screening assessment tools if it's done through the American Society of Addiction Medicine. So I guess if there is that type of support meted out for those who are not on social services, and that's why these organizations are formed, then indeed there must be some folks who need that assistance when they're on Ontario Works.

Maryland is another one that uses legislative support to link its medicated management care program and welfare offices. The state requires that all adults and teen parent participants be screened for substance abuse. Maryland also counts substance abuse treatments toward a participant's work requirements. Participants who do not comply with an assigned and available substance abuse treatment are removed from assistance—again, wanting them to participate. Nevada is another one: requires participants to work when welfare division staff determine them to be ready, but no later than 24 months after first receipt of cash assessment.

North Carolina places quality substance abuse professionals in every social service office. These professionals have become the focal point of screening assessment, treatment planning and care coordination for participants with substance abuse problems. They also require participants in the work program to spend a portion of a 24-hour week in work activities, the remainder of activities, such as treatment, that support work and self-sufficiency.

I just wanted to get it on the record that a number of states, a number of areas in this country, do believe that there is substance abuse and that it requires treatment. I think that is the key to it, that if we can give the treatment, we can then make those folks become more part of



society and allow them to get off the dependency of social assistance and get back into the workforce.

The other thing that we talked about yesterday was fraud. I won't expound on what I said yesterday, but as you know, I have great deal of difficulty with anybody who does any type of fraudulent activity. In my mind, taking money or abusing social assistance and getting something that is not due you is in fact stealing. One of the more high-profile welfare reforms the ministry has implemented is zero tolerance for welfare fraud. I think it is fair to say that this is one of the more hard-nosed approaches ever taken to welfare fraud.

I know, however, that a number of municipalities have expressed reservations about implementing this policy. Do you believe you're going to be able to implement this policy and do you believe that it is the right approach to fraud, given that these are some of the most vulnerable people in society? I know the critics say that by going with zero tolerance against fraud, some of these folks will be out on the street. I would really like to comment on that one, but I won't in mixed company, because I cannot understand any critic saying, "Oh, we'll condone it, because if we don't let you steal you may be out on the street." I have difficulty with that. Minister, how do you feel we are going to be able to implement zero tolerance for welfare fraud?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I certainly support the policy. I think you've got to send a powerful message. I think deterrence is important. In the past, it almost became administratively acceptable.

It was not dealt with, in my judgment, as seriously as it should be, so we've tried to undertake three major initiatives in this area, above and beyond zero tolerance, which is the consequence. Through the anti-fraud measures of the ministry, we have a fraud unit which, as I said yesterday, I think is one of the most impressive in the Ontario public sector in terms of their abilities. They do a phenomenal job. Some of the initiatives they've undertaken they've had great success with, with a relatively modest allocation. We have good success with that in terms of identifying. The ministry has upwards of 19 information-sharing agreements: for the first time, the left hand can know what the right hand is doing in terms of someone collecting benefit cheques from two governments. Someone could, in the past, have been collecting UI and welfare. The information-sharing agreements that are in place really are impressive. In the past, even within the Ontario public service, we haven't done as good a job in terms of saying someone is a client of the Ministry of Community and Social Services in terms of social assistance, but they're also a client of the Ministry of Correctional Services. I think we match the tapes every seven to 10 days, and in the last available report we identified 5,700 people who had not reported their change in circumstances. We obviously don't want to pay room and board twice, into one institution and one in the form of a cheque. So we've been able to clamp down and deal with those more expeditiously than we might have been in the past.

The second area has been through the consolidated verification process, which has been a good success in terms of establishing or re-establishing that someone is, and continues to be, eligible, under the Ontario Works Act or under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act for assistance. That has yielded very, very good results.

Third, and most importantly, we're undertaking a major effort to change the way we do business in terms of the delivery of social assistance to stop overpayments which are administrative overpayments. It is incredibly difficult if we've overpaid to get money back. We can try, but it's extremely difficult. With the new welfare reforms, we have 60,000 people on Ontario Works crews, who are employed, who have part-time jobs. Their ability to report that income through the design of the new welfare administration will be a lot better, so that it won't be taken off in six to seven weeks, it will be taken off in their next cheque to reflect those circumstances. It's awfully difficult to go to someone and say, "Because there was an administrative overpayment of a few thousand dollars, we're going to try to take it back." It's awfully difficult to go to someone because there was an administrative overpayment of a few thousand dollars and try to take it back. It's very difficult. You can only do it in a very small amount.

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Those are three initiatives we've done to bolster public confidence in the system, and zero tolerance is obviously a powerful deterrent. We were clear before the election campaign, during it and after it, with the announcement at least two or two-and-a-half months before the policy. We ensured that it was not retroactive, so that policy would apply only to someone who had knowingly committed criminal fraud. My view is that it will be a strong deterrent to people and it will show that fraud is something the government and taxpayers care about.

**Mr Stewart:** Can you tell me the number of calls or average calls that would come in on the welfare fraud hotline that was established a number of years ago? Are they decreasing? I hope they're decreasing, with the number of folks who are getting off social assistance or those who are getting off for varying reasons.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If I'm correct, we spend about \$143,000 or \$149,000 on the welfare fraud hotline. I think last year it saved us about \$8 million or \$9 million. I don't know how many calls we get.

We had 16,000 cases where assistance was reduced or terminated as a result of the fraud initiative. I don't know how many were from the fraud hotline itself, though.

**Ms Lankin:** Reduced and terminated or referred?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That would be the whole fraud initiative, not just as a result. It was about \$8 million or \$9 million of \$98 million from fraud, so about 10% of it was from the hotline. I don't know exactly how many calls. We can certainly get that back to you if you like.

**Mr Stewart:** My point being that since there has been a major reduction in welfare participants, possibly it would be coming down because those who are now getting it, and I would hope most of those who are getting it,



are very legitimate Ontario Works people and are legitimately trying to look for work and trying to be trained and so on and so forth. Not to take it out of place, but I hope it would be dropping in the amount of usage, that people are realizing that, hey, you cannot break the law.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Once we get the consolidated verification process and the new system, the new technology, up and running, I think we'll see even better results and they'll be more consistent as well.

**Mr Stewart:** I think we've only got about half a second left.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Could I just quickly?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I can tell you there were 19,662 calls in the 1999-2000 fiscal year; 8,825 of those calls were referred. Social assistance was reduced or terminated due to eligibility assessments and investigations in 883 of those cases.

**Ms Lankin:** Not 16,000 cases?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Totally—this is 883 of that 16,000.

**Ms Lankin:** Where they were reduced or terminated.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Where they were reduced or terminated, yes. It wasn't \$8 million; it was \$6.1 million.

**The Chair:** We now turn to the official opposition.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** First of all, I'd like to express appreciation. We have a number of people from the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee with us today, and I'm pleased they could join us.

I have a wide variety of questions. I have talked to a number of constituents and a number across Ontario who are on ODSP, have had a medical condition with a doctor's letter indicating their needs, and yet the staff at ODSP have ruled that they will not fund that particular medication. My question is, given that a doctor has made the decision, what medical training have the ODSP staff had to overrule and not support that particular medication?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Are you talking about prescription drugs?

**Mr Parsons:** Prescription drugs.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I imagine that would be if they were listed on the Ontario formulary. I believe it's just if they are on the formulary that they are covered under the drug plan. The Ministry of Health has a prescription drug formulary which is used not just for seniors but for social assistance.

**Mr Parsons:** So if there is an individual whose doctor has said that this particular medication is in fact life-saving but it's not on the list, then they do not get it?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That wouldn't be covered, yes. You're right.

**Mr Parsons:** That's a disconcerting response.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There has been a successive, long-standing policy that we have a formulary and that there's a specific scientific process with physicians from the province, the college, the OMA and the Ministry of Health in the establishment of that. If the Liberal Party wants to put forward a policy that we give doctors the

discretion to assign drugs haphazardly, we'd certainly consider it.

**Mr Parsons:** I'm not prepared to agree with the wording that it would be done haphazardly. I'm aware of instances where it's literally as a life-saving necessity and the ODSP has said no to it.

Second question: someone on Ontario Works gets 30 cents a kilometre for travelling—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll just say that we will double-check to ensure if there is an exception basis; there may be. We'll double-check that.

**Mr Parsons:** I'd appreciate that. I can share some actual examples with you after, if that would assist you.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There is as well, with the broader definition of prescription drugs, treatments and devices or assistive devices that are well above and beyond a strict prescription drug formulary.

**Mr Parsons:** Certainly the staff out in the field appear to not have any discretion whatsoever to make a decision, though. Everything is done off a formula or off a directive. I would think that clients, the people of Ontario, would be better served were there some discretionary powers given to staff, but that's an issue for you to deal with.

I have a second question, which has always intrigued me. People in Ontario Works gets 30 cents a kilometre for necessary travelling. People on ODSP get 18 cents a kilometre. What is the rhyme or reason? If Ontario Works has to travel from my community to Kingston for a medical, 30 cents; if they happen to be on ODSP, 18 cents.

**Hon Mr Baird:** An MPP, 29 cents.

**Mr Parsons:** Why the difference from 18 cents to 30 cents?

**Mr Whalen:** Can we look into that? There was a lower number in ODSP and it was changed, and if I'm honest with you, I'm not sure if the number you're quoting now is the current number of not. So, if we could get back to you on that.

**Mr Parsons:** OK. I think it's current as of yesterday. Certainly.

Now, I'm tempted to ask the question—it wouldn't be a flippant question—can you live on \$930 a month? We're asking people on ODSP to live on \$930 a month. We're saying if you're disabled, you must also be a pauper. You can't own your own house. You've got to deplete your RRSPs. You must live on \$930 a month.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You're allowed to own your own home and live on ODSP.

**Mr Parsons:** There is no hope that people can ever acquire enough savings to purchase their own home if they're unfortunate enough to go on to ODSP. I'm talking about people putting away some money.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There are thousands of people on ODSP who—

**Mr Parsons:** If they already have; but if they do not own a house and they have to go on the ODSP program, my understanding is that they have to deplete their assets

down to about \$5,000 before they will even get the package to apply for ODSP.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There's a minimum asset limit. It's much higher under ODSP than it is under Ontario Works, whether it's a vehicle and there's a number of greater exceptions.

**Mr Parsons:** But an individual who turns 18, is disabled, has a disability, and applies for ODSP, at \$930 a month they will never, ever, ever have even a dream of owning a home. Fair statement?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't accept that all recipients of the Ontario disability support program when they're 18—we're in the process of doubling the budget for employment supports. We've gotten rid of the term and the practice and the ideology and the thinking of "permanently unemployable." So, in fact, there are a good number of people on the Ontario disability support program who do take employment training or employment supports and do move into work; there are others, many others, who don't, but it's not—

**Mr Parsons:** I would suggest for someone who's deaf-blind, statistically, the chances of them getting meaningful employment are very, very slim in this province. So if they are deaf-blind and they turn of the age to receive the disability, they're not ever going to get more than \$930 a month.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I wouldn't make a categorical statement. Right across the province I had the opportunity to meet with a good number of folks. I was in Sudbury not long ago and met with the Greater Sudbury and District Association for Community Living. They have people with developmental disabilities, four or five of them, who recently started up their own store, with support. So there are a good number of ODSP recipients who do and who are able to take advantage of some supports. I think we can do more in supports, I really do.

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**Mr Parsons:** That sounds wonderful, but I know that in Ontario the unemployment rate for people who are deaf is 85%.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's pretty high, there's no doubt about it.

**Mr Parsons:** I think we need to deal with the 85% rather than the 15% who are employed.

**Hon Mr Baird:** And we need to try to get that 85% down, as well.

**Mr Parsons:** Exactly.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's why we're doubling the employment support budget and have got rid of the term "permanently unemployable" and that thinking. That's one of the challenges, not just within government and the private sector, but within families, communities, organizations and public attitudes. That's why I think it's important not to write anyone off or make a conclusion.

**Mr Parsons:** I'm not writing them off, but I'm saying that if the average unemployment rate among the deaf is 85%, then for that 85%, if they do not own a house now they will never own a house on \$930 a month. Am I correct that it has not been adjusted for about 10 years?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Eight or nine.

**Mr Parsons:** Yes. I've seen no movement whatsoever toward adjusting it. I think that for many people in Ontario—

**Hon Mr Baird:** My policy on that is the same as Dalton McGuinty's, though. Just last year, Dalton McGuinty said he wasn't prepared to commit to any rate increase. In fact, he issued—

**Mr Parsons:** You're the minister. You're responsible for these people.

**Hon Mr Baird:** But if you as the official critic for your party are going to throw a political charge, I'm going to respond. Not two years ago, Dalton McGuinty put out a press release saying that it was the policy of the Ontario Liberal Party that they were not going to raise social assistance rates in Ontario.

I think it's important to be honest about that. If you're going to be critical of our government for taking that policy, I'm going to show you a press release where your leader took a position on behalf of your party before the last provincial election campaign that agrees with me. So Dalton McGuinty and I are on one side and you're on the other.

**Mr Parsons:** Well, that was two years ago, and I guess I am pleased that you're now going to follow our direction on, I hope, any issue at all.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We can both follow it.

**Mr Parsons:** I think that was two years ago.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's the beauty of it. That was before the election; this is after the election.

**Mr Parsons:** For people who may have been working and who have acquired a disability that causes them to no longer be able to work, have you considered a mechanism that would allow them funding support to continue in a similar manner to the lifestyle they have been used to? It's a major drop to go from employment to the \$930 I referred to.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There are a number of responses to that. There are two programs operated by the federal government. There's the unemployment insurance program, where people can for a period, depending on the area they live in and what their employment income was—obviously if they were making more than \$930 a month, adjusted with respect to taxation and payroll taxes, that would be substantially more than that, for a limited period of time, under a year.

Second, there's Canada pension plan disability, to which they may or not be entitled, which also applies if someone has worked for a period of time.

**Mr Parsons:** It's still a major cut.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Plus the \$930, there's the GST credit and the provincial tax credit. There are a number of credits and benefits that exceed that cheque.

**Mr Parsons:** If someone is on Ontario Works and becomes disabled, they are immediately taken off Ontario Works because they're simply not available for work. But there can be—

**Hon Mr Baird:** People on the Ontario disability support program can be available for work. The disabled can



work. I strongly believe that. One of the things I learned when I came to the ministry—

**Mr Parsons:** That's not what I said. That's not what I'm talking about. If someone is on Ontario Works and becomes injured and has to apply for ODSP, when they become injured or disabled they are immediately removed from Ontario Works funding. They then apply for ODSP, which may take—I can document cases of six months before they were approved for ODSP. What are they to do in the six months between Ontario Works stopping and ODSP starting?

**Hon Mr Baird:** As an Ontario Works recipient, if you're injured or disabled you're entitled to stay on Ontario Works while you apply for the Ontario disability support program.

**Mr Parsons:** You may want to get back to me on that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No, I don't. As a matter of fact, people applying to ODSP can collect from the Ontario Works program while they're applying.

**Mr Parsons:** I'll get you some anecdotes on that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If there's been a misinterpretation of that somewhere, bring it to my attention. I'd be happy to take corrective action.

**Mr Parsons:** There clearly has been.

A constituent needing ODSP paperwork in Braille was told she should contact CNIB to see if they could do it in Braille for her. Surely ODSP paperwork should be available in Braille.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That issue was brought forward in the House last year, and I believe it was addressed.

**Mr Parsons:** Has it been acted on?

**Hon Mr Baird:** To the best of my knowledge, it has been. If it hasn't, again let me know.

**Mr Parsons:** If it has been done, I would ask—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes, it has been.

**Mr Parsons:** —that you get the paperwork out to your various offices then. It's not available

**Hon Mr Baird:** Sure.

**Mr Parsons:** My last question is, at one time Comsoc had in place a caseworker system, so that someone on ODSP could call and they had someone who knew their file. Now they retell the story each time to a different person—in simplistic terms, whoever answers the phone.

Have you considered going back to a caseworker system where they can get to know each other? It is very difficult for people on ODSP to deal with a different individual each and every time.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The short answer to that question would be no.

**The Chair:** Mr Gravelle. Before you start, Mr Gravelle, just for the minister's sake, we have approximately 28 minutes remaining for each of the parties, the opposition being in the middle of their allotment. We have all-party agreement to do that in a consecutive manner, so it would be the official opposition till about three minutes after, then the third party and then the government caucus to finish us up. OK?

**Hon Mr Baird:** When do the bells ring?

**The Chair:** We usually run here till 6.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We're to leave when the bells ring?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** We have a vote.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There's a vote, so we'll be ending early. Would that formula need to be adjusted to accommodate that?

**The Chair:** We don't normally take that into account. If we have a vote, we'll find out what time it is. Then we'll advise the Liberal caucus, and it will be adjusted accordingly. We always do that.

**Ms Lankin:** We might even be able to come back another day if there's a vote.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No. It's the last day.

**The Chair:** I don't want to put more time on this, Minister. I wanted to give you and other members of the committee advice on that.

Madame Boyer will be assuming the chair in a few minutes. May I ask you to continue, Mr Gravelle.

**Mr Gravelle:** Regardless, Minister, this is my last chance to ask any questions. There are lots, so I'm going to go quickly.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You can ask me questions any day you like.

**Mr Gravelle:** That's true. Let me ask you a direct question. I understand that your ministry, along with the Ministry of Health, is undertaking a full re-look at the way your government provides housing and related services to persons with special needs. First, is that true? Second, has your government given any consideration to moving these housing programs under just the Ministry of Health in order to end possible duplication between the two ministries?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I would say housing for people with special needs in a broader spectrum. There are four programs, three offered by the Ministry of Health, with which I am less familiar, and the domiciliary hostel program offered by our ministry.

As you know, we are currently reviewing that issue and looking at ways of addressing some of the challenges and issues they're facing. There are some legitimate concerns that the residents and operators of some facilities have brought, and we have had the benefit of some good consultations. Obviously I'm more familiar with the domiciliary hostel issue, because it falls within my ministry. We're currently reflecting on what we've heard, and no final decision has been made.

I suppose it would not be unreasonable to suggest, why do we have two ministries providing four programs, three in one ministry and the fourth in the other?

**Mr Gravelle:** Has any determination been made that it makes more sense to have them all in the Ministry of Health? Have you gone that far in the process?

**Hon Mr Baird:** No decision has been taken on that.

**Mr Gravelle:** Let me ask you a quick question as well—and I will move along here—in terms of you're announcement yesterday about mandatory drug testing, which obviously has been very controversial.

Are you planning to bring it forward in terms of legislation? I understand you may be in a position to do it under regulation, but are you thinking of legislation in



terms of mandatory drug testing for people on social assistance? Can we expect that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think it depends on how the program is designed and how the policy is designed, and the nature of an Ontario Works and ODSP issue. Obviously we're only looking at, I think, 0.0025% of the ODSP and Ontario Works caseload, so by and large it would depend on the result of the consultations we have over the next four to six weeks.

**Mr Gravelle:** What if the overwhelming number of people you consult reject the idea of mandatory testing? Are you going forward regardless? What if that happens?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I suppose the government will be every bit as flexible as the official opposition in terms of, if the consultations go really well, will you support it?

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**Mr Gravelle:** We look forward to seeing the consultation, of course. The truth is, there's no way you can support this on the basis that obviously it's a contravention of the Human Rights Code. There's no way you can do it in terms of the legal challenges. There's no way to do so. But I still think it's a fair question.

**Hon Mr Baird:** But if the integrity of—

**Mr Gravelle:** If indeed you do hear from people that you can't, that it shouldn't happen, will you consider that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** If the Human Rights Commissioner signed off on it, could I count on your support?

**Mr Gravelle:** Just answer the question, please, if you would, Minister.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Asking them is fun too.

**Mr Gravelle:** Maybe you won't answer the question.

**Mr Parsons:** He should answer it.

**Mr Gravelle:** Yes, well, he should answer it.

That brings me to the next point, which is, what form will the consultation take? Who will you be dealing with, and will you be listening to anybody who wishes to consult? In other words, if groups say, "We want to meet with you to talk about it," will you be open to that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We'll receive any submission that folks have. We want to consult with principally five groups of folks: people in Ontario, those who depend on the system and those who pay the freight; we want to talk to other jurisdictions to look at what's worked and what hasn't worked, whether that be in treatment or whether that be in terms of welfare; we want to talk to municipalities, our caseworkers, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has an Ontario Works committee that gives us advice from time to time, chaired by Joyce Savoline. We'll want to talk to treatment experts, physicians, community agency folks who deal in this area, and get their best advice.

We've certainly done a lot of work to date to be better informed on this issue in terms of moving forward with it. The more I deal with it, the more complicated I realize it is. It's not something that's easy. It's not something that's pretty. But it's something I think it would be wrong

to turn our back on and to not make an honest effort to try to offer help.

**Mr Gravelle:** Which brings me back to the question, though, Minister. If indeed all those groups you consult tell you why they don't think it can happen, for a variety of reasons—the legalities, the contraventions or whatever—or they don't think it will work, which I think is a significant point that may be made to you, that it simply won't work and obviously there are other ways to improve funding to treatment programs, if that happens, are you open to the possibility that you'll withdraw this, that you will not go forward with this, if that's the advice you receive from those people you consult?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I don't accept the premise of your point. We're open to consulting on how we implement this policy, not whether we implement it. It's the commitment we made and we're a government that keeps our campaign commitments. We want to consult and listen to people.

**Mr Gravelle:** So you're going to do it regardless of what you hear, is what you're saying. You're going to go ahead with mandatory drug testing regardless of what you hear, is what you're saying.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We made a commitment. We're going to follow through on it.

**Mr Gravelle:** Even if everyone—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Even if everyone says it's terrible, and even if, and even if—I mean, I don't accept the premise of your question. You say that no one agrees with it. I think there are a lot of people out there who would say that mandatory drug treatment can work. I realize this is a controversial issue, I realize that people don't always agree, but I don't accept the premise of your questions, the if, if, if, if.

**Mr Gravelle:** I appreciate that too. All I'm saying is that I think there's a reasonable chance that some of the groups you are consulting may tell you why they don't think—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I agree, definitely.

**Mr Gravelle:** And I want to know how seriously you're going to take that consultation.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think it's important, and I said this at the outset, that we'll consult on how. We want to listen; we want to learn.

**Mr Gravelle:** So it's not a real consultation in terms of whether—

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's not a consultation on "if." I was very clear at the outset on that.

**Mr Gravelle:** OK. Let me just move on; we haven't got much time.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We have the mileage answer to Mr Parsons's question. I'll leave it at your discretion as to when you'd like to hear it.

**Mr Gravelle:** OK, can you table that, or will it take long?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Whenever you'd like.

**Mr Gravelle:** A couple of quick other questions. I'm really short of time. What have I got, about five minutes?

**The Chair:** About seven minutes.

**Mr Gravelle:** Seven minutes, excellent.

Minister, one of the acts administered by your ministry is the offensively titled Homes for Retarded Persons Act. I know the developmental sector has told your government more than once that they would like the bill retitled, at a bare minimum, and perhaps completely overhauled in the long run.

**Hon Mr Baird:** They want it scrapped, not retitled. They want it scrapped, repealed.

**Mr Gravelle:** Exactly. So tell us what your plans are in regard to that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's one of the issues we've looked at in developmental services reform. My personal opinion is we should repeal it. It's offensive and—

**Mr Gravelle:** Is it on your agenda?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Definitely.

**Mr Gravelle:** Where does it sit in terms of priority?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's one of the issue we're looking at in terms of reform. My personal view is I find it offensive. The Ontario Association for Community Living, with which we have a very good working relationship, has identified it as one of their five big priorities, and it's one of the issues that's under our active consideration now. It's not an issue which I have to personally be convinced should be scrapped.

**The Chair:** Do you want to get your answer now? Would like to have this?

**Mr Parsons:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Minister, if you could. We need to hear it.

**Mr Whalen:** Very well. The answer on the transportation is that it is 18 cents—you were right—for ODSP. That's the new rate. It actually matches the rate we have for transportation for assistance to children with serious disabilities. That is consistent with the Ontario disability support program.

**Mr Parsons:** So there are two groups being discriminated against, then. OK.

**Mr Whalen:** In terms of Ontario Works, for self-employment transportation it's 18 cents per kilometre. That is an allowable business expense. For employment assistance activities, we actually provide a community start-up benefit of up to \$253 a year, and that includes all out-of-pocket expenses, including transportation, at the actual costs. Some municipalities may actually establish their own guidelines, so that would be an individual municipality. We have a similar one for employment placements and community placements. It's a cap of \$250 a year and it's all of the out-of-pocket expenses for the year. So any transportation would be incorporated in that.

**Mr Parsons:** I know Ontario Works is getting 30 cents. My bottom line, though, is, if MPPs are getting 29 cents, people on disability are getting 18 cents. Where do they buy their gas? There's got to be a much cheaper place.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Federal MPs get 42 cents, I think.

**Mr Parsons:** We're talking about us.

**Mr Gravelle:** That's a good point.

Minister, you talked about the supports to employment program, STEP, fairly often. You have introduced cuts to that program, which I think is nothing more than—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Adjustments.

**Mr Gravelle:** —a disguised cut to social assistance. I think you did this in the name of increasing the incentives to get full-time work, but you are actually imposing penalties, I think is how it's perceived in the community, for not doing so. Why have you cut back on that program? I think there is ample evidence that the program has been working and it does help build a bridge to the labour market. Under the changes, a single person earning well under \$200 per month is facing marginal tax rate hikes of I think 100%. I know the social community is very concerned about this and obviously it's something we feel strongly about. I wish I had more time to discuss it, but it's very much a problem and something we think is not going to work.

**Hon Mr Baird:** There is certainly no one on Ontario Works who I can conceive would be paying income tax from part-time income, at least Ontario income tax.

**Mr Gravelle:** So 100% tax rate is—you think that's—

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll give you the background on the issue of the STEP changes in terms of my thinking and in terms of the changes. This is an issue—I met with a group of caseworkers and two or three of them mentioned it. We went back and looked at it and I was certainly convinced.

The STEP change existed under the previous government. With the introduction of what I call the earn-back, the ability to earn back the difference between the old and the new rate, the 21.6% change that came into effect on October 1, 1995, it required some change. I think a small number of people were going into what I would call a holding pattern, where it actually might have been in their best interests to keep one foot in the welfare system and one foot in the working world. So we've time-limited some of STEP to two years rather than five. It had already been time-limited, so the principle that it should be time-limited was in place. We just moved it up from five years to two and made it a little bit flatter.

**Mr Gravelle:** How much time do I have left?

**The Acting Chair (Mrs Claudette Boyer):** Two minutes.

**Mr Gravelle:** The employment support funding: I've talked to municipalities about some of the things that are happening in terms of the changes to the system. One of the problems in terms of municipalities is the technology that drives the program. I think it's understood that it's archaic, and staff have wasted a lot of time duplicating client information.

My understanding is that under Minister Ecker they were actually—apparently it still takes the system 20 minutes to issue a cheque for transportation. The issues of the technology in terms of that were raised by Minister Ecker, and apparently she held a meeting with people in Ottawa and said the system would be fixed. Are you conscious of the problem that exists in terms of the systems out there?



**Hon Mr Baird:** The Ontario Works technology?

**Mr Gravelle:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Baird:** You bet. They're terrible.

**Mr Gravelle:** So how are we going to fix that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We've brought in Andersen Consulting.

**Mr Gravelle:** In other words, Andersen Consulting gets all the money. The fact is, you haven't fixed it, Minister. Municipalities are very frustrated by that.

1700

**Hon Mr Baird:** We're just building. We did the design, the building and now the rollout of that. It's actually coming on line. I was out in Mississauga a few weeks ago and saw some of that technology in place. I'm not going to defend the old technology. It should have been replaced years ago. Thank God, in this province we had a government that had the courage to recognize this problem. It was Tony Silipo, the Minister of Community and Social Services, who recognized that we had a technology problem. We're just following through on Tony's dream.

**Mr Gravelle:** We're all looking forward to the value-for-money report by the auditor next Tuesday.

The lack of transitional dollars for the new funding formula—I'm glad you're so delighted by your own answer, which is not that unusual for you, I'm learning.

There is a lack of transitional dollars to the new funding formula. Municipalities, I guess through AMO, have requested transition costs. They are contending that the ministry does not recognize the cost of supporting clients to employment. I know Ann Mulvale sent a letter on behalf of the municipalities I think in September 2000. I don't believe municipalities have heard anything regarding the transition costs. Can you tell us when the ministry will communicate—

**The Acting Chair:** Mr Gravelle, I think your time—

**Mr Gravelle:** —whether there will be transition costs?

**The Acting Chair:** I'm sorry, you can't have the answer.

**Mr Gravelle:** Come on, a quick answer?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm meeting with Ann Mulvale shortly.

**Mr Gravelle:** When?

**Hon Mr Baird:** This month.

**The Acting Chair:** Ms Lankin, it's your turn. You have until about 5:30.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, just before I start, I want to indicate that I know there are a number of people here who were downstairs meeting with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee and who have come up here. I just wanted to indicate for their information that my colleague Ms Martel did question you extensively on ODSP earlier on in this estimates process, and on Ontario Works.

**Hon Mr Baird:** And in the House.

**Ms Lankin:** And in the House, yes. I'm going to continue in the area dealing with domestic violence, but I

wanted them to know they can access that exchange through the Hansard record.

One leftover item from Ms Martel's questions to you yesterday about mandatory drug testing was that I understand you made a commitment to table Mr Norton's letter. I'm wondering if you have that here for us today.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm happy to table that but I don't have my briefcase. On my word, we'll get it to you.

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate your instincts better than the advice you just got back from the corner. That's good. So you will table that with the committee some time this afternoon?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We can send it to you or directly to Ms Martel.

**Ms Lankin:** OK. We will get that by tomorrow, then, in the morning? We would appreciate it.

Before I go back to the item of the province-wide crisis line—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Can I interrupt you? Did you want an answer to the question you raised before? I've got it now.

**Ms Lankin:** The province-wide crisis line?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes.

**Ms Lankin:** Yes. I'm going to come back to that. Just before I do, I hadn't intended to read this quote because I want to treat this question very seriously. This isn't the place for rhetorical exchanges except for the odd humorous one that I appreciate. You said a few minutes ago that you are a government that makes promises and keeps promises and that you live up to your word. So I decided I am going to read this quote to you, given your reluctance to acknowledge openly a current need for more shelter beds in this province. It reads as follows:

"Decades of study have established the need for more shelters for abused women and their children. It is long past time for government to dedicate the necessary resources to this problem and to work with volunteer groups in design and construction.

"The issue of financial cost pales in comparison to the moral demand for action in this area. However, even from a strictly financial standpoint, it is arguable that providing more shelters can save criminal justice costs in the long run."

Just so you know, that comes from page 18 of A Blueprint for Justice and Community Safety in Ontario, which was encompassed as part of the Common Sense Revolution.

You do have a commitment on this, Minister, and you've made the statement here again today, as your government often does, that once a commitment is made, you live up to your word. You've said that the studies have been done, that the need is undeniable, it's long past time for government action, that the financial costs pale in comparison to the moral imperative.

Perhaps I should ask you again with that, will you indicate to us that you will undertake an immediate review of shelter funding with a view to establish the increased levels in an attempt to meet the needs that are out there in the communities?



**Hon Mr Baird:** Your question and preamble suggest that I'm stating or suggesting that there isn't a valid concern, which I'm not. We're going to be meeting next week with representatives of the cross-sectoral group. I've certainly been working with my colleagues the Attorney General and the minister for women's issues. I'm engaged on this issue internally within the ministry with our officials, trying to identify the anecdotal suggestions that I hear, like you, and from you as well. I'm happy, certainly, to meet with OAITH again on this issue if that's a particular concern. I know it's one of the central issues that the cross-sectoral group has.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, I appreciate the genuine expression that you're making, and believe it. Those in your government at some point in time felt bold enough to put it down in writing, that the studies had been done, that the need was undeniable, that the moral imperative outweighed the financial cost. I guess what I'm saying to you is, take those words and run with them inside the government processes that you need to go through and where you need the support to advocate to get the money that is needed. The documentation has already been established within your own government's words and commitments. I'd be happy to stand in the House when you make this announcement and say, "A promise made, a promise kept. About time."

**Hon Mr Baird:** I appreciate your offer, and I appreciate that it's being recorded on Hansard.

**Ms Lankin:** You noticed that. OK.

A project proposal for a province-wide crisis line: this was submitted to you in July. I'm assuming that you have seen it and I'm assuming that there has been a review of it and that there is some movement in the ministry to either address the issue that's been put forward or to reject the premises of the proposal. Can you tell me what the status is?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm offering these points just as matters of fact, not to enter into a debate with you. In fact it wasn't sent to me. I hadn't seen it when you mentioned it earlier, and I was concerned and wondered why. It was sent to an official within the ministry, not to me directly.

**Ms Lankin:** And it hadn't been sent up to you? Given the number of times I've raised this in the House, the number of times we've come back to this, this has not been drawn to your attention?

**Hon Mr Baird:** We get—

**Ms Lankin:** I don't want to drop anyone in trouble here, but that is of great concern to me, this proposal. I have mentioned it specifically and I have asked questions on it directly, Minister. You should have seen it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I haven't got a question, certainly in the House, from you on this issue. I'll give you the—it was sent to staff.

Beth Bennet, the program director of the Assaulted Women's Helpline, I understand will be one of the representatives we meet with, whether it's next week, with the cross-sectoral group. Certainly the benefits of this type of proposal are good. The adequacy of what's in place now is obviously the central issue here, how we can best

provide supports through that. We've got to better co-ordinate our efforts to some of the victims' efforts down at the Ministry of the Solicitor General. So in terms of the need, the importance and the benefits of a helpline are there. Whether it's in domestic violence or rape crisis, it can obviously be pretty important. This is one of the central issues presented in September to the government, which I have read, and we're currently looking at the issue.

I know that's not the answer you want to see, and I don't have an intention of putting you off here. We do spend \$1.7 million in this area to date a year. I know there is a concern about the adequacy. We've been receiving 160,000 calls on the various lines.

**Ms Lankin:** Let me offer to you that I think it has been well established, in addition to the local lines, that there is a need for a province-wide line that can provide the multi-linguistic services as well as the TTY supports so that it is accessible and it is there and able to respond when women need the help.

1710

The proposal that has been submitted to your ministry is for roughly \$750,000 as the annual cost of operating. There is another couple of hundred thousand dollars-plus as a one-time capital upstart. So in the first year you're looking at \$1 million, and after that it drops down. It's something that doesn't take much time to turn around in terms of approvals. You have a meeting coming up. I suggest it's a very good place for you to start in terms of responding to the cross-sector strategy that has been submitted to you.

I do want to indicate to you that I have specifically asked in my questions about the establishment of this province-wide hotline. I have referred to the proposal that has been in. Even before the current proposal was in, talks were going on with the ministry for a year and a half, that I am aware of. This has been raised in previous questions. I can't tell you at this time, because my memory is blurred, whether it was by me or Ms Churley. It may well have been Ms Churley who raised this when she was critic in this area.

I hope you will take into account the length of time it's been around, and that people have honestly believed that serious work was going on and that it was under consideration in your office, and see if there's a way of expediting assessment of this proposal and of its assertions for the need that's out there and whether you can respond to it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Many of your points are fair. It wasn't in my office. Your points on whether it should have been are again fair. The issue is one we will consider. A lot of issues the sectoral group have come forward with which are significant. You are very correct to say this is one of their more modest requests.

**Ms Lankin:** Can I ask you about that? You made a comment earlier and I was in the middle of some questions so I didn't want to take you up on it, but I found it disturbing. You talked about a number of the demands in the cross-sectoral strategy. I'm sorry, I can't remember

the exact word, but they were “excessive” or they were very—I don’t know which word you used, but it was a superlative that expressed your belief that some of them were very unrealistic demands. I found that very disturbing.

I should tell you that you would not believe the work the cross-sectoral group went through to pare down what they believe is the list of things the government must do to respond to this critical issue of putting an end to domestic violence. They pared that down and had a lot of difficulty coming to an agreement across all the various sectors that are embodied in that strategy, and they did so with a view to a set of demands that were realistic and implementable, ones that total a cost of \$350 million, which is only 10% of the budget surplus.

I don’t want to be rhetorical, and I don’t believe this is. I believe the issue is so serious, and we all feel very passionate about it when we get into it. How much is a life worth? How much is saving a life worth? When are we going to see a response on these community demands? When you said that, I was very disturbed. Can you tell me which of their demands you find to be excessive or unreasonable?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I wouldn’t say “excessive” or “unreasonable” would be the words with which I would characterize it. One of their recommendations that I recall was to increase social assistance rates by 21.6% or beyond. That’s far more than the \$300-million policy change that you just enumerated.

Some merit more serious consideration: the issue of the shelter capacity system within the province, both at existing shelters and in areas where there may be none or where the community may be underserved. I’ve used examples like Kanata, which 10 years ago had 25,000 people and today would have 50,000 or 55,000 people. They brought forward some concerns with respect to francophone women and the services that are offered to them. Obviously that was doubly important to me in terms of my cabinet responsibilities. Another request was in terms of the phone helpline, which we’ve just discussed. There was one, if I recall correctly, that affected our ministry with respect to deferment from mandatory requirements under Ontario Works, which is one that I am unaware of and I’d certainly be open to hearing it. There is the ability and discretion at the caseworker level to give a temporary deferment. If someone’s been the victim of violence—

**Ms Lankin:** They’re looking for a full deferment; they’re aware of the temporary deferment.

**Hon Mr Baird:** They can get a temporary deferment. That is not unreasonable whatsoever. I’m not suggesting it’s not a concern and a problem, but if it is then I haven’t heard any specific incidents. And if it is, I’d like to hear about them. No one would suggest that the victim of any violent crime—

**Ms Lankin:** I think you will be able to ask that question directly and they’ll be able to respond to you. Similarly, in the same vein, they are asking you to stop the practice of requiring or requesting that women

disclosing violence seek child support or spousal support in order to qualify for social assistance.

If someone is a victim of spousal abuse, the last thing you want to do is place them in a situation where, in order to get the supports to support their family, they have to go to that abusive spouse to get child support or to get spousal support. While we would all agree that the first line of responsibility lies between partners in a marriage and we want to ensure that spousal support and child support is paid, where a person is a victim of domestic abuse, to require them to go and seek that out in order to qualify for social assistance is a significant and onerous and dangerous requirement that you’re placing on them. So they would like you to look at reviewing that and lifting that requirement.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Obviously, that would be assigned to the ministry. It would not be assigned to them individually. If there’s—

**Ms Lankin:** What do you mean, “It would not be assigned to them”?

**Hon Mr Baird:** If someone’s on Ontario Works and there’s child support—

**Ms Lankin:** You’re talking about the actual payment, the assignment? But they need to seek it. You require that they seek that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Maybe administratively we can tell how that’s dealt with.

I understand that there can be a deferral period for three to six months, a period which can be renewed in that area. We can get you some more information on the administrative practices of the ministry in that area. It is an issue which we discussed a year ago.

**Ms Lankin:** I think it’s something that you should take a look at in terms of how it’s actually being practised out there with the ministry and workers out in the field. Legitimately, living up to your expectations for tougher enforcement of all of the rules, in fact people have found themselves in a difficult situation and/or have found themselves in a situation where even if they, through lawyers, can seek the supports, they have put themselves in greater danger because it escalates the pathology in the relationship at that point in time.

**Hon Mr Baird:** This would be one of the reasons we want to sit down and talk to representatives of the group. It is a delicate issue, obviously. At the same time, we don’t want to be letting people off just because they’re criminals, letting them off without having to pay child support. That causes me another concern. But that’s why we want to sit down and talk to the group, so that if someone doesn’t—

**Ms Lankin:** OK. I would appreciate it if you would have some people take a look at that before you go in. One of the things that I’m hopeful we can do, by the fact that you’ve had enough time to review the proposals that are in there, the fact that again I’m highlighting some of them with you, is that you will have answers to some of these things before you go in to meet with the group. This continues to drag on, and I do understand how things work inside the government, but some of these



initiatives—like the shelter funding review: Minister, it's over two years since the May-Iles recommendation. It is not acceptable for the ministry not to have prepared a definitive response with which you can go and talk to those women and say, "Yes, we're going to do it. This is the time frame and now let's talk about how it happens." 1720

**Hon Mr Baird:** The cross-sectoral group—this is the report that came in September—asked for meetings with, I think, just about everyone in the government except me. If they had asked to meet with me, I would have met them. I was in town that day and I could have met with them. I wasn't asked to meet with them. I would have met with them, and I'm meeting with them—

**Ms Lankin:** I'm going to ask you to please accept the fact that I've only got about 10 minutes left here.

**Hon Mr Baird:** But if I could just add one little quick thing, and I appreciate that. I want to underline that this is an important area. Within our ministry, in the 1995-96 budget year, we spent \$66.7 million, and this year we're spending \$81.7 million. I think it does represent a priority that I and the ministry have accorded to it.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, I have well heard members of your government stand in the debate on the domestic violence and the restraining order bill that's in and say over and over again, "As a government, we're spending now \$37 million more than when we took over." I can tell you that when your government took over, across various programs—second-stage housing cancellation and other things—you cut \$9 million a year. Cumulatively, that's \$45 million in services that women have not received over that period of time, and an increase of \$37 million doesn't make up for that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It does.

**Ms Lankin:** We've got a way to go, right?

**Hon Mr Baird:** With great respect, in 1994-95, the government was spending \$97.9 million. Today we're spending \$134.1 million. We're not necessarily spending it all entirely on the same thing, but I think we are doing a lot.

**Ms Lankin:** That's \$37 million?

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's \$37 million more money. Now maybe not on the same—

**Ms Lankin:** That's \$37 million more money—

**Hon Mr Baird:** A year.

**Ms Lankin:**—after you had cut the \$9 million a year.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No.

**Ms Lankin:** Cumulatively, that is \$45 million of services that women lost. Gradually you're ramping back up, but you haven't met that same amount is the point I'm making.

**Hon Mr Baird:** With great respect, you're trying to suggest that number is not a net number. That is a net number.

**Ms Lankin:** No, no. I understand.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I think that's the impression people might be left with.

**Ms Lankin:** That's not what I'm saying. Clearly you understand the point that I'm making. I know you don't

disagree that there's more to be done. Let's get back to the specifics, though, of where we're at.

The proposal to reinstate second-stage housing: since the moment your government cancelled those supports for second-stage housing, there has been a demand. It has been raised over and over in the House. It's been raised with the minister responsible for women's issues. It has been raised across government. Your Premier, this fall, said that putting an end to domestic violence was going to be one of the key priorities. That's after you had already made the announcement of the \$10 million in the budget. That's after there had already been the announcement of the money for the cell phones from the Attorney General—I can't tell how disdainful people out in the community are of that initiative and how much better that money could be spent.

The only thing we have seen come forward from your government has been the restraining order bill, which has some merit to it but affects such a small number of people it's not worthy of discussion in this context.

In your role, looking at the supports that women need in their communities, do you acknowledge and understand the important services that were provided through supports in second-stage housing—the community counselling services and supports—and the gap that has been created by the cancellation of that, and do you have a plan to either lobby for the reinstatement of that program and/or in some face-saving way, I don't care, reinstate the content of what was being done so that women in our communities have access to those services?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I appreciate the concern and I've heard the concern expressed by the Ontario caucus, the second-stage housing group. I've met with them. I've heard from them directly. They participated in our consultations on the design of the budget initiative with respect to transitional supports.

I think there can be a reasonable debate about what kind of supports are offered. I don't think you or I, or your party or mine, would disagree that the government has a role here, that we should be doing things, that we could do more—in terms of a summary of your last comments. I think where we would have a difference of opinion is on what mix of services, what would be the best mix of service in terms of—we've talked about this—community support, things on the social services side, the housing side, the justice side, the court and judicial side, the police officer side—

**Ms Lankin:** If I could be clear here, I'm not talking about the proposal for more affordable housing. I'm talking about the proposal for supports, the second-stage housing, after a woman has been in a shelter, leaves the shelter and goes into a transitional housing program, the supports that made up second-stage housing and made it a unique service. It's those community supports which fall directly under the responsibility of your ministry.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I agreed that we could do more in the area of transitional supports. The budget initiative for \$5 million in that area, delivered through a different mechanism—I acknowledge it's a different mechanism and



not the one of choice for the Ontario caucus—was a vehicle to try to address the need for us to do more. I concede that reasonable people can disagree on where that money should be spent.

**Ms Lankin:** Do you recognize the need for a proportion of those women who leave shelters to have safe, secure housing accommodation with on-site supports to help them put their lives back together, keep their kids safe and move to re-establishing some normality in their lives? While you may be putting supports out there that people can access in the community, the concept of second-stage housing, the concept of someone moving into a place where there are security systems in place, where they know they are safe, where they're not in fear every minute of their lives, where they can go out of their living space and to a place within that same accommodation to get support and help—do you understand how critical that can be to a woman starting to put her life and her kids' lives back together?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I have certainly spoken with a number of representatives who have made those points.

**Ms Lankin:** And?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I guess there is a difference of opinion. There was an issue of \$2.9 million, and I think the Ontario caucus is now using, in terms of requests, \$3.6 million in supports to help with that transition, building on the \$4 million we have already spent on the housing component, which continues to be spent. There are 25 second-stage housing projects around the province which continue to get support through the local services realignment.

**Ms Lankin:** That's affordable housing; that's the housing side of it.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes, that's the housing side of it. I realize people say we could do more on the transition side. I agree. They said, "Spend \$3.6 million here," and I said, "Spend \$5 million over there." So there was a difference of opinion. Mine was more money, but I guess it was an honest difference of opinion on how we could best spend that money.

**Ms Lankin:** The more recent demand from second-stage housing has been formulated specifically with the knowledge of your \$5 million for transitional supports. So I don't think you can characterize what you've done as being more than has been asked for from the community.

**Hon Mr Baird:** No. I used the requests over the last number of years, which I recall from preceding my time at the ministry were—and I think they came forward on a number of pre-budget consultations, if I'm not mistaken, or I certainly saw some submissions in the past before I arrived at the ministry. There was an issue on \$2.9 million of funding to provide those transitional supports.

**Ms Lankin:** But we're not talking about the same kind of transitional supports. I think that's the problem here. It's like the way the minister responsible for women's issues uses the term "women's centres." We should perhaps get a common definition of the things we're talking about, because it's too easy to simply work

on a level of confusion about what we are and are not prepared to do, and in this area it's too important not to. Let me ask you specifically what you disagree with about the second-stage housing supports, the programs your government cut, and the reason you have not been prepared to reinstate support to those programs for five years? What is the element of that and how that's delivered that you disagree with?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I wouldn't suggest for a moment that any decision is black or white, that one support is wrong and one support is right. I think reasonable people using normative judgment could come to different opinions about what type of supports we can provide to women in terms of making a transition from an emergency shelter, from one of the 98 shelters we fund, to get their lives back on track, to get reintegrated into a community and get their kids back in school, to be able to get back on their feet in terms of getting a job, to feel safe in their community, to feel safe in their home, to have a sense of security. There is a difference of opinion which reasonable people can have on how we do that, and I think we have a reasonable difference of opinion.

1730

**Ms Lankin:** I'm running out of time.

**The Acting Chair:** You've got two minutes left.

**Ms Lankin:** I won't even take that.

In a closing comment, I find it difficult to understand how you actually have come to a point where you can say reasonable people can have a difference of opinion on this issue—in the abstract I understand it—how you can say you have come to a different opinion. We have not once been able to get ministers of the crown to answer why you will not support the requests that have been coming forward on specific issues. Whether it be the jury recommendations in certain areas that were highlighted from May-Iles, whether it be a request like the crisis line proposal, whether it be requests like reinstatement of second-stage housing programs or expansion of shelters, there is never a definitive answer.

If you actually have come to a different opinion, lay your cards on the table. If not, then I have to suggest to you that the women you will be meeting with in a week's time are the experts. They are the ones who know. They are on the front line every day delivering these services and working with abused women and their children. They know what's happening, they know what's missing in the system, they know how the gaps have to be filled. While you may find the list of demands to be beyond what you as a government are capable of responding to right now, for God's sake, at least respond in what areas you're prepared to move and why, and what areas you can't move on and why not. Where there is a disagreement on content, tell us. Where there is an inability to move because of the price tag and it's something you look to in the future, tell us. Let's get some clear dialogue, because this issue is too important to leave to politicians to bandy about in the Legislature through question period, which is not a forum for honest dialogue. You've got that opportunity, and I'm asking you to please make the most of it

in your preparation and to urge your two colleagues to do the same, so that when you go to that meeting it is a dialogue that moves forward, not spins its wheels on this important discussion.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I understand I've been the only minister who has met with them in four or five years.

**Ms Lankin:** I appreciate that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** So I'm not reticent to be engaged.

**Ms Lankin:** I hope you're going to move the agenda forward. I'm looking to you to lead this.

**The Acting Chair:** Your time is up. The government now has 28 minutes.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Minister, the pressure continues for new programs, and obviously it's going to come. But I want to caution you and your ministry that before any of these programs is considered, you check with other ministries as to what is provided. This is a long-standing problem, and if one did not know the inside workings of the system—if you were a victim, you would never know how to get help. Let me give you many examples.

Surely you've heard pressure for a specific type of program. One thing I continually see as a problem in Ontario is that many different governments have come up with many different initiatives at a given point in time, and all with good reason: there was a need out there. The difficulty is that when a new one is created, the old one is never eliminated. When a new one that has a much broader outlook is created, the old one lives and continues to increase its funding. Let me give you some examples.

You've heard of some needs. The large police services have crisis intervention teams to help with crisis intervention and domestic violence. The large departments have that presently. Many of them, just to help victims, manage their way through help centres and where to get help. The smaller services, through our ministry of the Solicitor General, use volunteers in remote areas where you cannot justify full-service teams but have full-time staff to train volunteers to do that. The Ministry of the Attorney General has the same sort of thing in the courts to help people through the court process after the police are done with that stage. For many years rape crisis centres have been funded through our ministry. But at some point in time the Ministry of Health came up with sexual assault treatment centres which go above and beyond that, where you have qualified medical staff to do sexual assault examinations and counselling along with it. Yet we continue to fund the others to the same degree we did before.

There are battered women's advocates, and Ms Lankin talked about the need for support out in the community. Certainly affordable housing is very important, but I always thought that battered women's advocates did follow-up work after. The whole point of battered women's advocates was to support women who either had not gone to court, where charges had not been laid, or well after that process was over as a follow-up service.

I really caution that when we start a new program, we check what is available within other ministries and build upon that rather than start a new one. Frankly you would have to be an expert, you would have to be the deputy minister of a certain ministry to even know how to access that. That is not my experience with victims; it's someone who has found themselves in a desperate situation and they need help at that time.

We've heard a lot of political rambling today, and I'm going to do my fair share of it right now. We hear the Liberals today tough on crime on domestic violence. They want weapons of all sorts seized from people. Well, you know what? There are Criminal Code provisions that if someone is violent, the police can go in and seize those weapons. So we can get through all the political nonsense: those provisions are there under the Criminal Code.

The Attorney General put forth what is provincial jurisdiction: restraining orders. Restraining orders are not for people who have been assaulted. This is a much lesser degree, someone who feels they are under some sort of threat—it has not occurred.

So you hear the political rambling. Mr Gravelle gave his legal opinion, or that of others, that perhaps drug testing for people who are on social assistance who you feel are drug addicts is somehow against the human rights code. I would like to know from the Liberal caucus if they would put forward a legal opinion on whether it's constitutional to take someone's weapons before they've committed anything? Bring that forward. You have a lot of lawyers.

I wonder if they would put their name to such a legal opinion using their law degree beside it. I doubt it very much. If they feel strongly that such an amendment would be constitutional, put that on paper with their LL.B. beside it and see how they would be taken within the legal profession; probably not very highly.

We've heard a lot of this stuff continually today. I just urge you and your ministry, before you consider any further programs—I'm not denying the need for some of them, but ensure that you know what is available through other ministries.

**Hon Mr Baird:** If I could just respond a bit, I want to completely agree with you. Particularly in the area of violence against women, I think it's important to work to provide a comprehensive set of supports. At the same time, it's important to try to focus on that. That's one of the things I think—we announced this new initiative with respect to transitional support workers. We're using our 98 shelters. We're not reinventing a new system holus-bolus. I agree with you. But we have the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Ontario Women's Directorate, the Ontario Seniors' Directorate, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, and the office of Francophone Affairs, all working on the challenge of domestic violence.



I think we can do a better job of coordinating. The ministries have tried to work more closely together, particularly ours and Health, we've been real leaders in that in terms of co-locating our offices in the regions, so that the front-line supports we're providing can be done better. Some good work has been done in that area, as well as in terms of the Attorney General and the minister for women's issues. We are trying to be more actively engaged and work more closely together with our ministries to ensure that doesn't happen. I think what you said is good advice.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On the issue of the Child and Family Services Act—I asked you about it yesterday but we ran out of time. The title of that act has actually been changed several times over the years; I was going to say the Family and Children's Services Act. Some amendments were made, and there was a ministry news release dated March 27. This act has been changed many times through the years. The wording always changes, but the realities are the same. What is a child in need of protection, and what are the difficulties for a case worker or police officers or anyone trying to actually deal with that subject? I'm just wondering, what was the intention of some of the amendments you made the act, and have they seemed to work?

1740

**Hon Mr Baird:** In simple terms, I think we wanted to tilt the balance more in favour of child welfare and child protection. Too often there were a number of other good but competing factors on the table which maybe did not serve vulnerable children in need of protection as well as we could have. We've certainly raised the bar and given more authority to people to intervene and provide that support. Things like common risk assessment tools and systems required a whole host of administrative supports as well, not just on the legislative side.

In terms of funding, we're well over an 80% increase in funding. I'll be shocked if it's not 100% in short order. We have 760 new protection workers who were either hired or are being hired, so many people we couldn't hire them as fast as we would have liked over the last three years.

We've substantially increased the rates for foster parents to try to encourage more of that, which is obviously a better environment and more cost-effective to taxpayers. We've improved training for current and new staff and made a substantial investment in technology. There's been a good amount of change there to deal with.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, I want to talk about something Mike Gravelle raised earlier, and that is mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients. He questioned you as to what consultation process you were going to undergo and what you would do in the event that all the consultation suggested we should not adopt mandatory drug testing. I would like to add my input on that. That was contained in the Blueprint. We campaigned on it during the election campaign last year.

I come from a blue-collar riding, and many of my constituents spoke out long and hard in support of that

issue. I think we've already engaged in the consultation process that is necessary. In spite of what Keith Norton suggests, the people in my riding are very strongly in favour of mandatory drug testing.

Mr Norton has suggested it's discrimination. It is left to the imagination, I guess, that someone in the workplace is allowed to use drugs and not lose his job. Many of these blue-collar workers I spoke with and continue to speak with suggest that if people in the workplace are on drugs or are using or abusing drugs, they shouldn't be in the workplace because it endangers the lives and welfare of those who are not. I would like to add my voice very strongly in support of your carrying on with mandatory drug testing, and I speak as a representative of my constituents in this regard.

However, I really want to talk about something else.

**Mr Gravelle:** You don't think there's any need for consultation?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You had your time.

I would like to speak to an issue that is of grave concern to everyone in Canada today, especially those in the larger cities, but certainly we're not exempt from it in the region of Waterloo—Kitchener Centre, my riding—and that is homelessness.

Many reasons are given: drugs, mental illness, to escape a bad home situation. In any case, there are many reasons. We accept that. It's not an issue that is going to be solved by one person, one agency or one level of government.

I've noticed that in 1998-99, the actual spending in that regard by your ministry was \$6.7 million. That increased in 1999-2000 to \$17,366,988, and in the estimates for 2000-01, that has been further increased to \$29 million-plus. What role do you see your ministry taking in this issue of homelessness?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The short answer is that in terms of the government as a whole we put in \$100 million of new funding to provide supports to people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. We identified the city of Toronto as being the biggest service provider in terms of money for support for the homeless. We can do more on mental housing supports. More of that has been announced and will be rolling out, and people will benefit. As well, our colleague Tony Clement will provide more supplements as that program rolls out. We've put a \$10-million program to municipalities, the provincial homelessness initiatives funding, which has provided substantial supports. So there is a significant increase in supports, building on the \$2 billion we already spend helping people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

I wonder if I might ask for one minute just to put a comment on the record, if I could.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** By all means.

**Hon Mr Baird:** This is the response in terms of the office budget. I've got the numbers.

In terms of the 24% increase mentioned in the budget, in terms of salaries and wages, we only have one parliamentary assistant. That will save \$65,000 on the salaries



and wages side, so that will be down. In-year expenditures of our ministry are \$148,000 less, so that would amount to only a 3% increase over the 1999-2000 actuals, and that would also account for my having two cabinet responsibilities as opposed to one. It may come in less than that, because it also includes the deputy minister's office and the minister responsible for children.

**Mr Gravelle:** I appreciate that, Minister. Could I have a copy of that?

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's my handwritten notes.

**Mr Gravelle:** OK.

**The Acting Chair:** I apologize, but we're called for a vote, and we need to vote here.

Shall votes 701 and 702 carry? Carried.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services carry? Carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to the House? That's carried.

Thank you very much. We're just in time for our vote in the House.

*The committee adjourned at 1748.*









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Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington L)

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings PC)

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Ms Susan Sourial

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